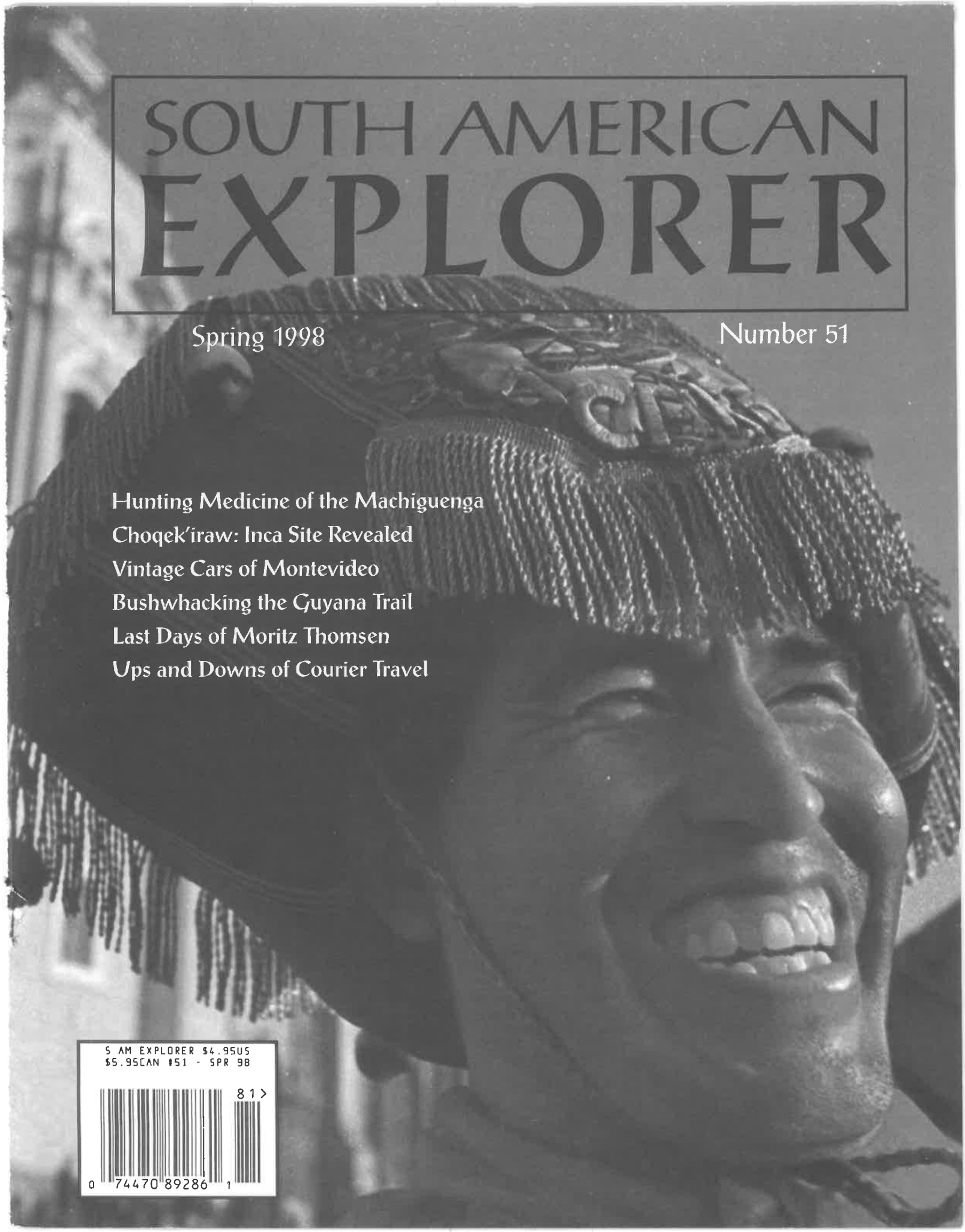

SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORER

Spring 1998 Number 51

Hunting Medicine of the Machiguenga
Choqek'iraw: Inca Site Revealed
Vintage Cars of Montevideo
Bushwhacking the Guyana Trail
Last Days of Moritz Thomsen
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South American Explorers Club

The South American Explorers Club

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With Clubhouses in Quito, Ecuador, and Lima, Peru, and U.S. headquarters in Ithaca, New York, the SAEC collects and makes available to its members up-to-date, reliable information about Central and South America.

Membership is US $40 ($60 couple) per year. Residents outside the U.S. (including Canada and Mexico) add US$7 for postage. Those wishing to sign up in the United Kingdom can join through Bradt Publications (Please allow 4-6 weeks to receive membership cards), 41 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 OLA, U.K.

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- Further the exchange of information among travelers, outdoors people and researchers
- Support scientific field exploration and research in the social and natural sciences
- Promote field sports such as mountaineering, white water running, hiking, caving, biking and others.
- Awaken greater interest in and appreciation for wilderness conservation and wildlife protection.
- Receive contributions for projects aimed at conserving natural resources and improving social conditions in Latin America.

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To join the Club: Contact us at our U.S. headquarters, use the order form on page 63, or sign up at one of the clubhouses.

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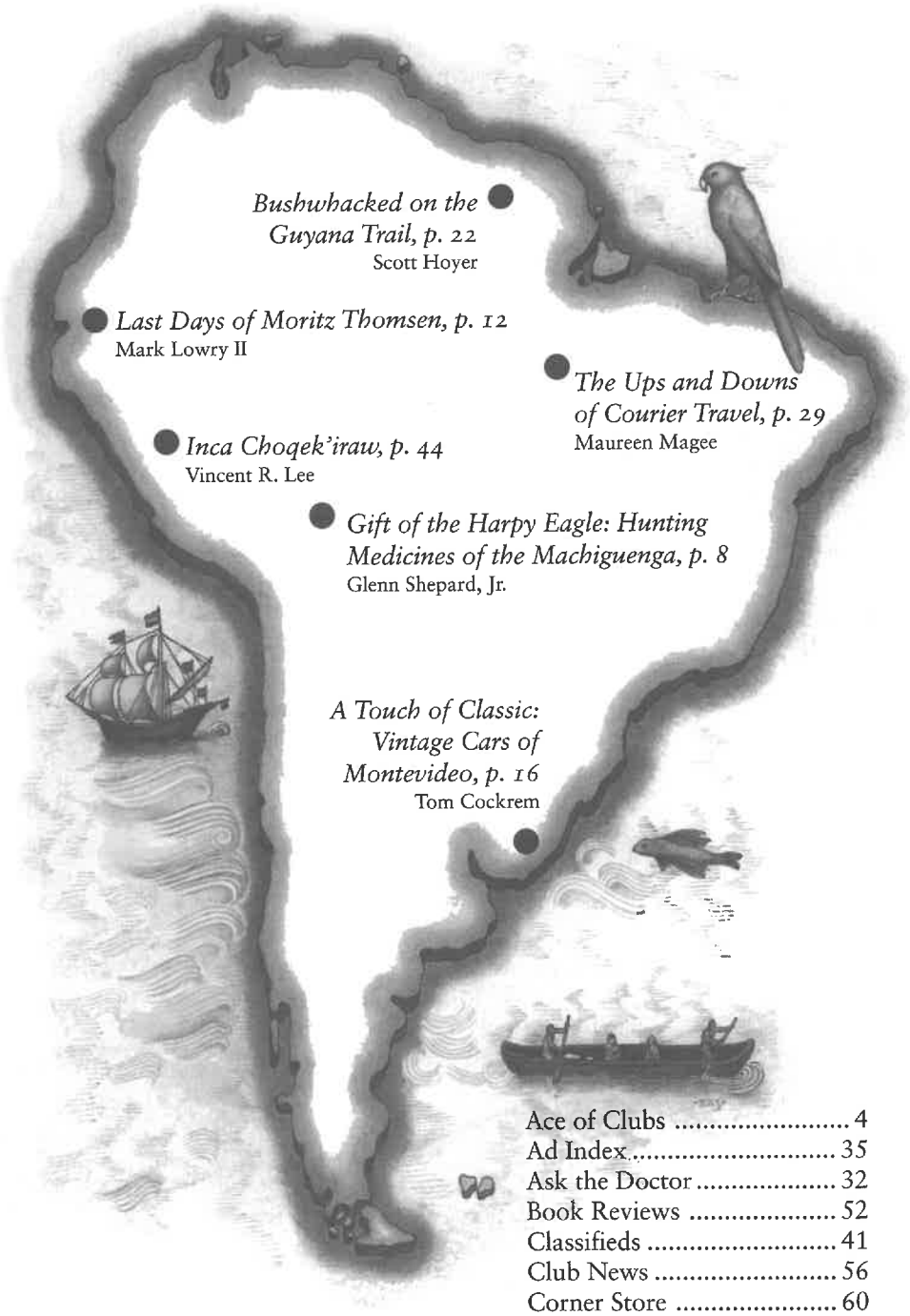

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It might be member Jeff Tan #92423, or then again, Casey Williamson #51266. Anybody, actually. The important thing is to be prepared. Of course, we're all hoping it will be a Club member.

What have we been doing to get ready? Quite a lot. The staff has shown overwhelming support throughout. Thursday night staff attendance has soared to almost 100 percent. To give the membership an idea of what the Club's been doing, we've come up with a dramatic simulation of the way events might unfold.

Remember this is ONLY a simulation. Reality might be somewhat different than we anticipate.

Scene: Ithaca, NY, Thursday night, sometime in the future.

As usual, the entire staff is present. Arthur, the unpaid observer from the *Skeptical Inquirer* is helping to slice the pizza with mushrooms, green peppers, double-onions, and extra-cheese. Vicky is finishing up some Club business, Saoirse e-mailing the last few messages of the day, Lynda logging in new members. The usual festive air prevails.

But there's something decidedly different about this Thursday night. As many who are present will later attest, energy levels on this particular evening are strangely but noticeably more intense than normal.

At exactly sundown, Don rings a little silver bell. Conversation ceases, and staff members solemnly file toward what has become known as the Spirit Salon. Entering, they take their places around the simple oak table.

Minutes pass in the dim light. Might it be an illusion? No! Beyond a doubt, the pointer on the Ouija board twitches, jerks, then suddenly flips up on one corner to spin with blinding speed like a top while emitting an eerie, hypnotic hum. Time is suspended.

Accounts differ. No one can recall the precise moment, but at some point, Saoirse goes rigid. Arthur looks on, aghast as her eyes turn red and swirl in their sockets. Lynda watches in horror as a bubbly froth seeps between her teeth. Don shrinks back as her head rotates on her neck like a basketball on a finger. Pamela shivers at the bone-chilling plunge in temperature. And all are stunned when Saoirse's lips slowly part and a gravelly, menacing voice wells up from deep in her throat:

"It is I, Adam Shoer, Member #80480."

We can't give the whole conversation. After all, from start to finish, the seance lasts almost an hour and ten minutes. It's enough to say the effect is overpowering, exhausting, devastating. There's something about talking to the dead—it does you in.

Well, members, it's beyond belief, but the momentous event we all planned for has just happened. The Ithaca Club opened a channel to the Great Beyond and actually talked to a dearly departed member of the South American Explorers Club. History will never be the same.

OK, OK. So much for the dramatic simulation.

Did we actually channel a dead member? Well, no. Not yet. But we're working on it. And it just might happen any day now. That's one point. The second point: It might be YOU.

That's what this whole exercise is all about—to prepare the SAEC membership, just in case.

So what's to prepare?

Well, think about it. Just suppose it's 2040 A.D. and we channel YOU. Will you be ready? Will you know what to do? What to say? Don't forget, here on Earth, there are a lot of sneering skeptics. You'll have to prove you're a bona fide spirit. To do this, you're going to have to deliver the goods.

Continued on page 6

To the Editor:

This is in response to Carin Luhr's mysterious symptoms (Tips and Notes, *SAE*, Issue 50).

Back in 1951 I spent some six weeks in Tingo Maria (en route to Riberalta, Bolivia). While there, I wanted to explore a hillside cave that could be seen from town. I was told by many that the cave was cursed and people that had entered it sickened and died of unknown causes. I put it all down to local superstitions but found enough reasons to not explore it after all.

Fast-forward now about thirty years. I read an article on the findings of (I think) a Maryknoll nun medical doctor. She found in Peru a fungus that grew on bat guano in caves. If inhaled, the fungal spores caused a serious illness with strange symptoms almost impossible to diagnose, very difficult to treat, and capable of causing death.

Being both exotic and rare, there probably aren't even a handful of diagnostic labs that would ever think to look for it or know what to look for.

In Issue 42 of the *SAE* (on shooting a movie in Tingo), there's an interesting sentence: "Heavies wrestled in bat guano during action sequences....one died within the year." Does anyone know of what?

"Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome" sounds like it, too, could grow fungal spores. I'd give the Center For Disease Control a try—and bring up fungal spores. Good luck!

Paul Tobler

To the Editor:

I was impressed with Marifran Carlson's article on Eva Perón (*SAE*, Issue 49). Ms. Carlson implied that Evita united the working class women of Argentina to make strides to obtain their rights. I wrote an article to that effect some sixteen years ago when the British production of *Evita* played at the St. Edward's Theater in London—they portrayed her as a strumpet of the first order. My point of view in the article was parallel with Ms. Carlson's: The feminist movement in the 1940s and 1950s was elitist, while Evita was visceral and truly for the people.

Also, it's interesting how the press in Argentina stated that Evita had "throat cancer" when in actuality it was cervical cancer. *La garganta* can refer to two things in Spanish. Given the allegations against Evita, the "throat" at the back of the mouth rather than the "throat" lower down was more propitious to describe the condition.

Kevin Carpenter

To the Editor:

Glad you've recovered from the neural degeneration, or whatever it was, that resulted in the publication of "Ecuador, Mi Amor" back in Issue 48. And kudos to Loren "Mac" McIntyre for what was evidently a sterling career—and for the skill with which he wedged its high points into his recent epistle on the *South American Explorer*'s twentieth anniversary. If I'd been lucky enough to witness a genuine massacre, I'd give myself a pat on the back, too (and that thing about the pyramids that *weren't really pyramids?* Fantastic!). To me, Big Mac embodies the traditional spirit of American adventure *sur la frontera*, as he might say, if he spoke Spanish as badly as I do.

So, of course I was disappointed when, after several paragraphs of richly deserved self-congratulation, McIntyre suddenly corked off a couple of rhetorical pot-shots in my

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Some points to think about:

•The staff feels that any demonstration of spiritual authenticity should be convincing but tasteful, dramatic yet low key. You get the point. So, for instance, any publicity stunt should be upbeat. This means no storms, droughts, or locusts. Use your own judgement, of course, but what we had in mind (and this is just an example) is shifting sunspots around to spell out "SAEC."

•Great explorers don't wait for the last moment to come up with some significant quote, and we hope you won't either. It's absolutely essential that you have something memorable to say on the historic occasion when you take over Saoirse and speak. Can't think of what to say? It's just an idea, but what about "One small step for man, one giant leap for the South American Explorers Club"? Remember, it's up to you, but your staff is here to help.

•The Club expects on-going exclusivity. What does this mean? No channeling through other mediums, no guest appearances on the Larry King Show or Meet the Press. No press conferences, period. We assume you'll have achieved a state of omniscience and be privy to all sorts of hot topics like "Did O. J. Do It?" and "Where's Jimmy Hoffa?" so, of course, we expect you to channel these and other blockbusters through the Club.

•You'll have a lot on your mind when you're dying, but there's a key security issue to think about. It's absolutely vital that you remember your membership number. This way, we'll be able to verify you're YOU when you contact us through Saoirse or another Club staff medium. There's the real fear that the Club might be taken in if we accidentally channel some malicious imp or, worse, some disgruntled ex-member.

•If a good opportunity presents itself, push Afterlife membership in the South American Explorers Club. We'll be publishing what you have to say in the *South American Explorer*, and of course it would be nice if you could slip in a plug now and then about how Afterlife membership makes things better and eases adjustment to existence beyond the grave. Stress the prestige of being toasted at the annual Club memorial bashes.

•Heaven will no doubt open up divine (ha, ha) opportunities for membership recruitment. Obviously, we recommend approaching those souls with some South American connection first, explorers like Orellana, Bingham, Amundsen, Darwin, Humboldt, Annie Peck, Faucett, and lesser notables like Alejandro Malaspina and Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada. Point out the benefits of posthumous membership and the Club's willingness to accept insider tips (e.g. stock splits, winning Lotto numbers, buried treasure, etc.) in payment.

•Bear in mind that others will be following in your footsteps. It may seem a small thing up there in Heaven, but consider your fellow members and make the effort to write a well-written, legible, and detailed trip report. This will be especially important for this uncharted terrain.

•Finally, when there's time, we'd appreciate your scouting out the prominent geographical features of Kingdom Come. We look forward to descriptions of a whole new territory with mountains, lakes, etc. waiting to be named after worthy SAEC members, e.g. Mount Starbuck, the River of Ebertz, Mt. Ague, Morris Minor, the Valley of Vecchio, the Sheila Sea, Currie Canyon, Mt. Tan, etc. Not only could these be a fitting and timely (should we say "timeless"?) reward, but even serve as an inducement to regular members to enroll as Supporting, Contributing, Life, and Afterlife members.

Of course, to you, our esteemed Contributing, Supporting, Life, and Afterlife members, angels all who didn't wait to give their names to some peak in paradise or a celestial river, our undying gratitude and timeless thanks.

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direction. Was he jealous that I got to be in an earthquake? Disgusted that I hadn't enjoyed it much? Did I really insult a whole *country*, a popular language, and a pretty great ex-girlfriend? (Last I heard, she's shaved her head and is living in an art museum in Ireland. Really.) At first, I thought he'd missed the point—hadn't understood that the story might be interesting *because* it was internal, as much about its author's bourgeois failure of spirit as it was about Ecuador itself. But in retrospect, I've decided he was right (except that us poets would never, no matter how desperate, wipe our rears with Juan Montalvo): "Ecuador, Mi Amor" was a pretty limp-wristed exercise all the way round.

Which is why I'm really writing—to see if you're interested in either of the two pieces I'm working on: "Biking the Galapagos" and "Amazon Dung Beetles: Overlooked Protein Source." They might be more appealing to guys like Mac than the fussy, fluffy "Ecuador, Mi Amor." I await your response.

All best,

Jon Loomis

To the Editor:

I work in western Panama in an area inhabited by the Ngobe-Bugle Indians, also known as the Guaymies. One of the many problems these people encounter is snake bites. The survival rate is high if those bitten by poisonous snakes get to a clinic, but many of these people live hours from help. Each year several Ngobe-Bugles die from not getting medical attention quickly enough after a snake bite.

I am told there was an Italian physician with African bush experience in the area trying to promote a snake bite remedy from Africa. It consists primarily of charcoal from burned cow bones. This is ground into a powder, made into a paste, then applied to the snake-bitten area to suck the venom out of the wound. It also works for scorpions.

The local people have asked my company to assist them in setting up a factory to produce this paste which they would then package and distribute to remote areas.

All of the above sounds like a good idea, and we would be willing to fund this. However, the amount of money they are requesting to build their factory might best be used to buy conventional snake bite kits.

I am looking for someone with experience in natural medicine who would be able to confirm (or deny) the efficacy of the remedy. Unfortunately, the Italian doctor seems to have come and gone without leaving any information outside of the basic recipe.

I can be reached by e-mail at mshaw@pty.com, fax at (570) 263 2449, or mail at Panapac 3008, P.O. Box 025539, Miami, FL 33102-5539. I would really appreciate some leads.

Mike Shaw

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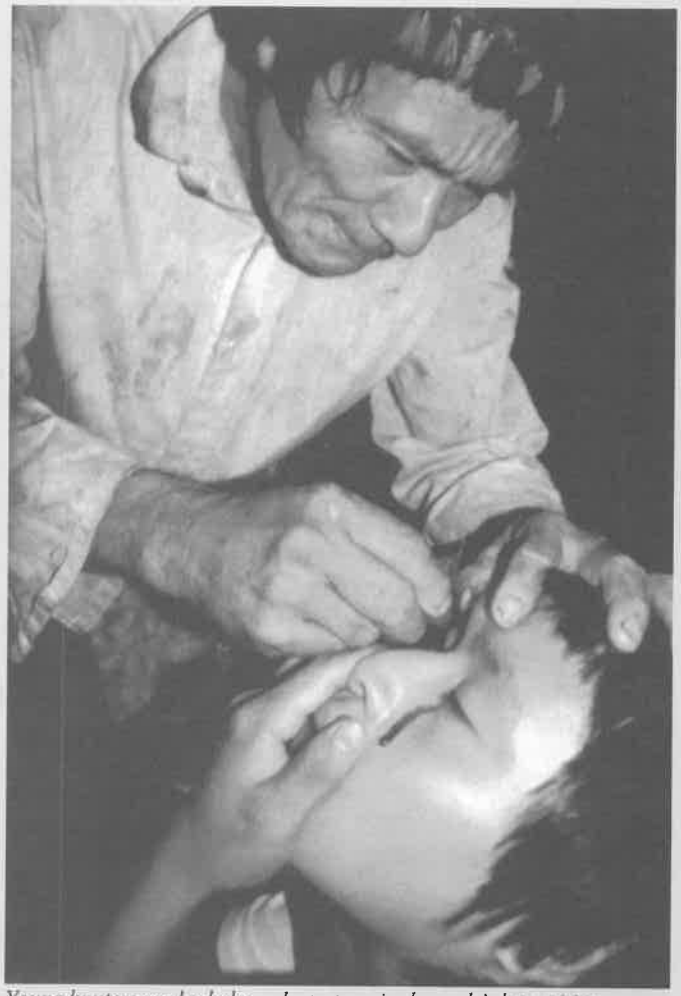
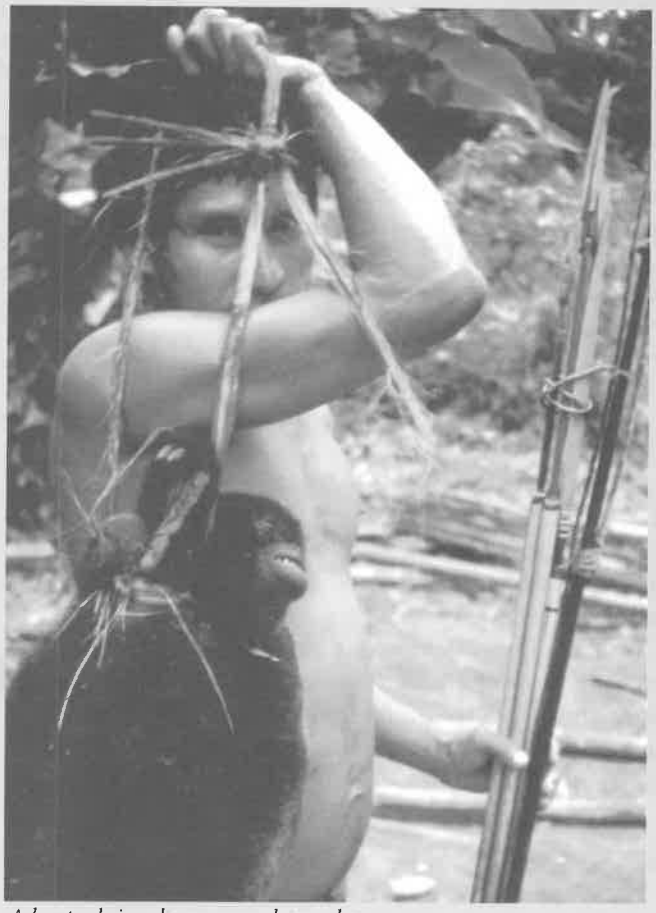
The hunter aims the arrow straight up into the high forest canopy.



Young hunters use herbal eye drops to gain the eagle's keen vision.

Women use sedges to improve weaving and spinning skills.



A hunter brings home a wooly monkey.

Gift of the Harpy Eagle

Hunting Medicines of the Machiguenga

Photos and text by
Glenn Shepard, Jr.

A Kill in the Rain Forests of Manu

Cesar, the one they call *Irasaniri*, "Bitten by Caiman," pulls back firm and hard on his palm wood bow, aiming the razor sharp bamboo tip of an arrow straight up into the rain forest canopy. Eighty feet above, a large male spider monkey eats *Pouteria* fruits, unaware of the human predator below. Suddenly, the black silhouette of the monkey leaps to another branch. "Probably heard us," Cesar whispers to his brother-in-law, releasing the tension on the bow in a smooth snap.

He steps quietly, bending back a few spindly palms that block his view, never taking his eyes off the monkey high overhead. Once again, he takes up his stance, and this time removes a small cluster of sedge bulbs from a net bag slung across his back. Snapping off a piece, he chews the bitter, aromatic quid, then rubs the chewed root onto his bow and arrow. Still watching the monkey, he spits a fine, turpentine-smelling spray upward. "Straight up, straight to the heart, no branches, fly straight and fast," he mumbles to the bow, to the arrow, to the monkey, to himself.

The author's Machiguenga "grandfather" fingers a sedge variety used when spearing fish. The chewed bulb is spit into the water, focusing the hunter's attention and "mesmerizing" the fish.

Straight up, straight to the heart, no branches, fly straight and fast

For a moment, the muscles across his back stand out in relief as he draws and aims the taut bow. With a soft grunt and a snap of the string he releases the arrow. The scream is almost human as the arrow hits the monkey square in the chest. A less true shot and the monkey might have fled with a flesh wound, resulting in a long and exhausting chase. Instead, the monkey wobbles, loses its grip, and plummets to the jungle floor in a shower of blood.

Cesar barely looks at his prey as his brother-in-law removes the arrow and returns it. Ripping a few thin vines from a nearby

Glenn Shepard Jr. is an anthropologist at the University of California, Berkeley who has spent more than ten years studying the traditional medicine, ecological knowledge and folklore of the Machiguenga and other native peoples. His work is featured in two films by the Discovery Channel, "Spirits of the Rainforest" (1993), winner of two Emmy awards, and "The Spirit Hunters" (1994). Mail: Department of Anthropology, 232 Kroeber Hall, U.C. Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. E-mail: GoNativ@aol.com.

tree he binds up the monkey and shoulders the bundle while Cesar leads the way back home.

Hunting and Machiguenga Culture

Machiguenga hunters learn to craft and shoot the bow and arrow when scarcely old enough to walk. Beginning at age three with tiny toy contraptions good only for impaling butterflies and frogs, a Machiguenga boy at about ten graduates to a half-size palm wood bow. He shoots small birds on hunting trips with his father and uncles. By sixteen, he is a man with the skills and physical stamina required to hunt game animals, especially monkeys, peccaries, tapir and agoutis as well as a large variety of game birds.

For the Machiguenga, hunting skill comes from special plants

Spider and woolly monkeys are the most highly prized game animals eaten by the Machiguenga. An adult male spider monkey can weigh over twenty pounds. During the rainy season—February through April—many forest fruits ripen and monkeys grow fat. It is customary to hunt monkeys during this season and rarely in the dry season when the meat is lean and stringy. Seasonal hunting may allow monkey populations a respite from hunting pressure.

In addition to its seasonal scarcity there is also a high prestige value associated with monkey meat: quick, acrobatic, intelligent and elusive, monkeys represent a great challenge even to skilled hunters. Being a good hunter for the Machiguenga means being a good monkey hunter.

Do the Machiguenga become great hunters through years of daily practice with bow and arrow that begins in childhood? Or is hunting skill some natural talent inherited from a father with exceptional vision or athletic ability? If you ask a Machiguenga, the answer to both questions is no. For the Machiguenga, there is no such thing as a good hunter, good practice, good luck, or good genes. There is only good hunting medicine. And the best hunting medicine is the medicinal sedge.

For the Machiguenga, hunting skill comes from special plants—what I call "hunting medicines." These sharpen a hunter's visual acuity, aim, sense of smell, and stamina. Dependent as they are on wild game and fish for virtually all their protein requirements, hunting medicines are thus crucial in the Machiguenga pharmacopoeia. More than fifty species or a full quarter of all medicinal plants known to the Machiguenga, are hunting medicines. Of these, there are two basic types: 1) Plants taken by men to improve their hunting skills, and 2) Plants used to enhance a dog's prowess at tracking large game. Both types of hunting medicine belong to male ethnobotanical specialization, complementing women's specialized knowledge of plants used to care for newborn infants. Taken together, male hunting plants and female child care plants account for more than a hundred species.

Male Hunting Medicines: The Gift of the Harpy Eagle

The harpy eagle is the epitome of hunting prowess. With its huge wingspan, powerful talons and acute vision, the harpy eagle is a formidable predator. It, like the Machiguenga, feeds on monkeys high in the forest canopy. The Machiguenga consider the feathers of eagles and hawks to be the best fletching material for arrows.

According to Machiguenga mythology, the harpy eagle spirit long ago walked the earth in human form and taught shamans its own hunting secrets: the knowledge of special toxic plants to sharpen vision, cleanse the body and purify the soul.

more astonishingly, it also instilled a remarkable, albeit temporary, ability to juggle grapefruits.

There are four general kinds of male hunting medicine: 1) Sedges (like the one used by Cesar) used to steady the hands and guide the arrow, 2) Eye drops to improve vision and heighten the other senses, 3) Purgatives and emetics to flush impurities from the body, 4) Hallucinogens and narcotics to transport the soul to other dimensions where the hunter communes with the harpy eagle or the jealous spirits that raise and release game animals for people to hunt.

Sedges and the Hunter's Skill

Sedges (*Cyperus*), or *ivenkiki* in the Machiguenga language, are the most important of all medicines. Machiguenga men grow dozens of sedge varieties in their gardens, each one prized for its enhancement of skills in hunting a different animal—spider monkeys, woolly monkeys, various game birds, and fish. There is even a sedge to improve the warrior's skill in combating hostile tribes. Other sedge varieties are rubbed on the hands while planting specific crops to make them more hardy. Women, too, have their own sedge varieties—to bathe

babies, soothe fevers, control illness and ward off harmful animal and plant spirits. Other sedges are used for headaches, fevers, cuts, diarrhea, birth control, hemorrhages during childbirth, insanity, and so on. In more acculturated regions, there are sedges that protect against terrorists and army troops lurking in the jungle.

Many sedge varieties appear to be botanically identical. Only the grower is able to distinguish one from another. When I first learned that sedges were used for such a wide variety of ills and conditions, I wrote them off as superstition. With time, however, I have come to appreciate the Machiguenga's extensive knowledge about the rain forest and its plants and animals. Everything they have ever told me, whether it appeared at the time to be factual or superstitious in nature, has always turned out to be true. For example, I tried one of the sedge varieties to relieve a splitting headache. It relieved my headache, but even more astonishingly, it also instilled a remarkable, albeit temporary, ability to juggle grapefruits.

the same group of fungi from which LSD was first isolated.

For amusement, I would sometimes pick up a few fruits and perform a clumsy juggling act, only to give up amidst laughter and a shower of fruits splattering on the ground. After taking the sedge for my headache, I happened to repeat the juggling act and was able to keep all the fruit in the air without drifting frantically about. More surprising than this, I was also able to perfect a number of tricks and variations I had never mastered before. While the Machiguenga were merely amused, I was both amazed and intrigued. Somehow, the sedge plant had improved my hand-eye coordination (or my nerve), turning a clumsy juggler, at least temporarily, into a rather polished showman. "If it can do that for me," I mused, "Imagine the effect on a skilled and experienced bow hunter!"

a Zen-like state of contemplation where the bow, the arrow, the prey and the hunter become one

Recent research into the pharmacology of the sedges used by indigenous peoples of the Amazon provides insights into the chemical composition of these plants (Plowman et al.). Cultivated sedges are typically infected by ergot-producing fungi of the Claviceps family. This is the same group of fungi from which LSD (an ergot alkaloid) was first isolated. The fungus infects the entire plant, destroying the fruits and flowers, infusing the roots with its rich alkaloid content. The fungus-infected plant cannot reproduce without human propagation from bulbs. The fungus and its ergot-alkaloids are most likely responsible for the medicinal properties of the Machiguenga sedges.

Since sedges and their fungal parasites are reproduced by vegetative propagation, a kind of cloning, it is probable that different sedge-fungus clones contain different ergot alkaloids in varying concentrations. This would explain the diverse physiological effects attributed to them by the Machiguenga. One study (Clay et al.) found eight unknown ergot alkaloids in a single sedge plant brought from Ecuador. Ergot alkaloids constrict blood vessels and alter uterine contractions; this would explain their ability to treat wounds, reduce postpartum hemorrhaging and control female fertility. The use of sedges to improve hunting skill (and juggling prowess) is probably the result of a mild psychoactive agent stimulating the nervous system and heightening sensory perceptions.

When a Machiguenga chews on a bit of sedge root in the forest, telling his arrow to fly straight to the monkey's heart, he is not engaging in an idle superstition. He is giving time for the psychoactive effects of the sedge plant to infuse his body, while he focuses his mind on the most important details of the scene—a Zen-like state of contemplation where the bow, the arrow, the prey and the hunter become one in the moment before the kill.

Conclusion

Medicinal sedges, such as the one used by Cesar to hunt monkeys—and others used to treat a feverish baby, a dog slashed by a peccary tusk, a woman undergoing a difficult childbirth—were prohibited by Protestant missionaries working with the Machiguenga since the 1950's. The missionaries regarded such practices as "Satan's work" that could damn the practitioner's soul to eternal suffering in Hell. Many Machiguenga abandoned their sedges years ago and now regret it. Others held on to their traditions and retain their confidence in their ancient medicines. In the words of one Machiguenga healer, "The missionaries told us to give up sedges and pray to God for healing and luck when hunting. But when I pray to God, I don't get better from sickness, and my aim stays bad. If I use my sedge medicines, I get well, and my aim improves. I think I'll keep my sedges and leave the prayers to the missionaries."

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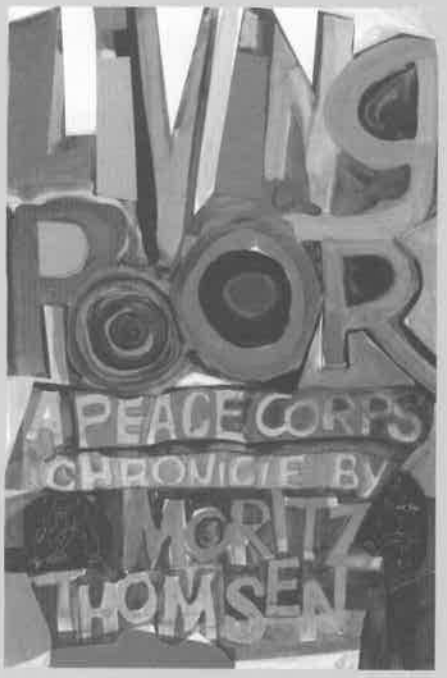
Mark Lowry II

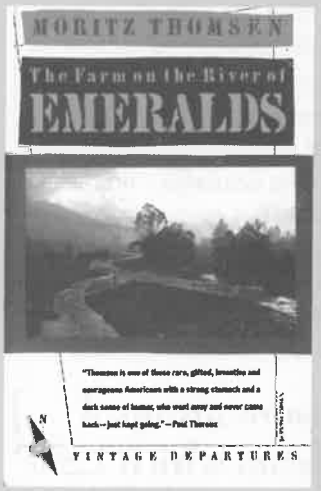
(Left to right) Esther, David Santiago, Mark Lowry II, and David's father Ramoncito. Esther and Ramoncito are members of Moritz Thomsen's adopted family.

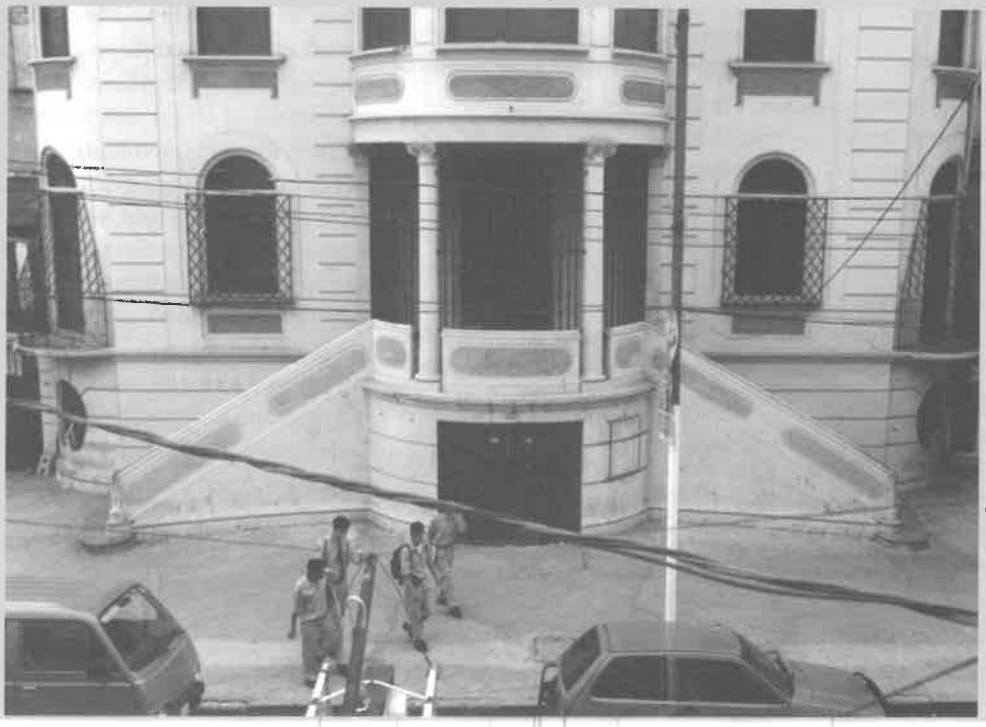


Living Poor *and* The Farm on the River of Emeralds, *two of Moritz Thomsen's acclaimed novels.*

Mark Lowry II

Sidewalk entrance to Moritz's apartment at 507 Luque, Guayaquil.



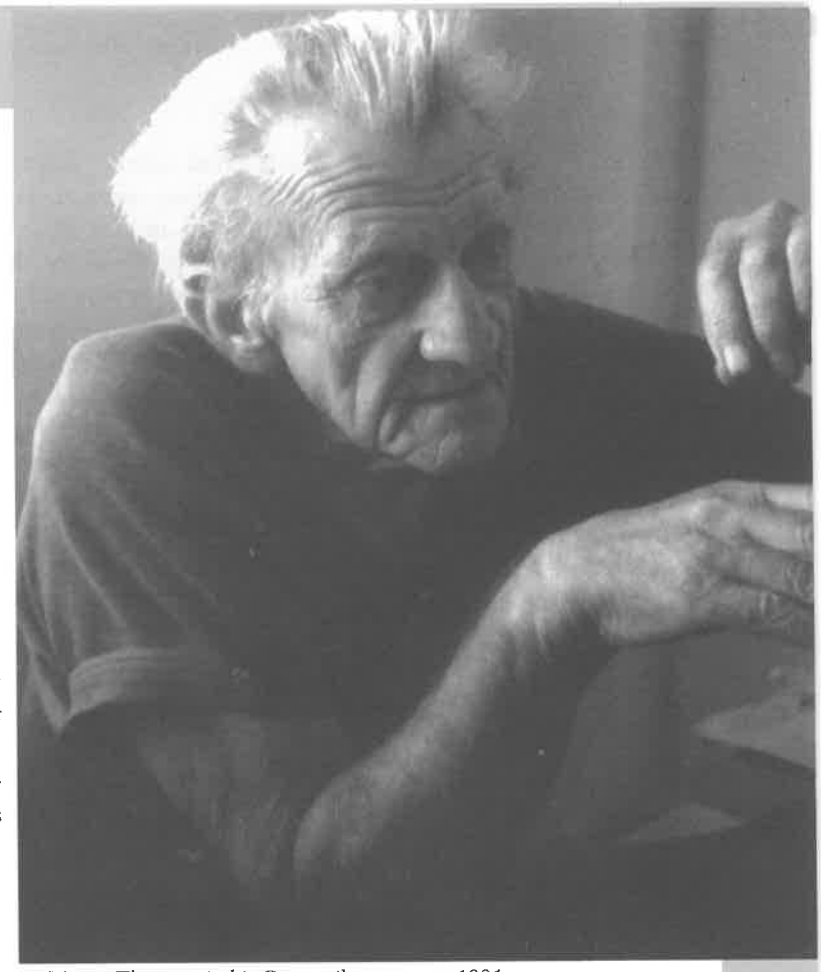


Mark Lowry II

Old Greek building across from Moritz's window.

Last Days of Moritz Thomsen

by Mark Lowry II



Moritz Thomsen in his Guyaquil apartment, 1991. Photo by Joseph Haratani.

For the last twenty-six years of his life, Moritz Thomsen lived in Ecuador. It's there he wrote his four books: *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*, *Farm on the River of Emeralds*, *The Saddest Pleasure: A Journey on Two Rivers*, and *My Two Wars*. Toward the end of his life, he was still gathering material for a fifth book. He died studying his own death as if he intended to write about that, too.

"Out, let me out, let me out of this f—ing country!"

Moritz joined the Peace Corps in 1964. After he got out, he moved about every four years or whenever he ran out of material and exhausted the emotional compulsion to write. Driven by this crisis, he moved on. Moritz suffered the writer's curse—he could never rest from his work.

In 1987, Moritz left his last small farm at Tachina, just across the river from the city of Esmeraldas. He was in a rage and dead set on going back to the United States for good. He barked at the ticket agent in Quito, "Out, let me out, let me out of this f—ing country!" But Moritz couldn't just get on a plane. As a resident, he had to deal with all the Ecuadorean red tape before he could leave. It took time, and after he cooled down, he had "neither the strength nor the necessary level of rage to kick the last of Ecuador's dust from beneath (his) gringo heels." Then, too, Moritz hadn't lived in the United States for twenty-two years; no ties called him home. He would stay in Ecuador, but not in Quito. Plagued for years by emphysema, he had to live at lower altitudes.

Bert Scott, a fellow American expatriate, was one of Moritz's best friends. He met Moritz shortly after he arrived in Ecuador and was there at the end. Bert owned a bookstore, Libreria Científica, in the center of Guayaquil. He knew Moritz as well as anyone.

Moritz trusted Bert and had no qualms about showing up in Guayaquil unannounced. Bert found Moritz an apartment just three short blocks from the bookstore, provided a post office box for him, and helped him in countless ways. Bert made sure that there was food and a doctor when Moritz was sick. He supplied books and conversation and, most of all, friendship. Knowledgeable in English literature, Bert was an intellectual who could hold his own with Moritz. Moritz may have preferred to live out his days in places other than Guayaquil. But Bert was here, and he stayed.

Moritz lived in a small one-room apartment. To reach it, you passed through a narrow doorway into a dark, damp stairwell and climbed three steep flights of worn, creaking wooden steps with a shaky banister. There were no signs that the internationally famous Moritz Thomsen lived there, but any local on the sidewalk could tell a visitor where to find the "old gringo." After climbing the

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rickety stairs and knocking on Moritz's door, you would most likely hear, "Who the hell is it?! Go away! I don't want any goddamned visitors!" The ornery old man would most likely relent, however, if you took time to pique his curiosity.

Go away! I don't want any goddamned visitors!

Moritz's guests were invariably appalled at his wretched quarters—one room with a small bath and kitchen alcove. The one room served as bedroom, study, and sitting room. No paintings hung on the stark white walls. The curtainless windows had not been cleaned in ages. Moritz shuffled about on a floor of wooden slats. The water-stained plaster ceiling was so high, sounds echoed around the room. The only light came from light bulbs hanging down from the ceiling on wires.

What little furniture Moritz had was simple. A double bed was shoved against one wall and was covered with a thin mattress and faded, wrinkled, dirty-beige sheets. An unpainted wooden table and chair stood at one window, a matching chair at the other. There was a shelf with mildewed, worm-eaten books and boxes stuffed with letters and magazines. Moritz had no use for a telephone or television set. His one luxury was a quality sound system with detachable speakers. Moritz loved music and liked it loud. But in Guayaquil, he listened less and less, and finally not at all. When he gave up his passion for music, a close friend felt Moritz had given up, too, and was just "biding his time until he could die."

On his books, tapes, and furniture, the dust and soot of Guayaquil had settled, dust and soot everywhere—even on Moritz himself. Papers and cigarette butts lay strewn about the floor. Moritz preferred Lucky Strikes and the stronger U. S. cigarettes to Ecuadorian smokes. The one exception were the Ecuadorian Full Speeds. There were milk cartons everywhere and beer bottles all over the place. A smell of sour milk and stale beer hovered. A trench through the trash led not to the door, but from the bed at one end of the room to the bathroom and kitchen at the other.

Moritz prepared his own food. He had a hot plate but lived on tuna fish right out of the can, sometimes with rice, an egg, a banana, or a lemon. He drank beer with every meal, if he could. Moritz had one frying pan, one fork, one or two spoons, and some tin plates. At times, friends brought him fresh vegetables, fruit, canned soups, canned tuna, ice cream, or cookies. He appreciated some of these gifts; others he resented. Once, Moritz warned a visiting writer, "I don't have any beer, cigarettes, or food," then relented, "But you can come in anyway."

While Moritz seemed oblivious to the way he lived, his friends weren't. Two old Army Air Corps buddies from World War II showed up about eight months before he died. Disgusted by what they saw, they hauled him protesting to a nearby tavern, then returned to clean up his apartment. When his buddies met Bert, they were surprised that anyone would even try to take care of Moritz, because, as Bert put it, "Really, he didn't give a sh-t....A couple of times he had crud on him an inch thick." Still, Bert urged Moritz to take a bath and clean himself up.

This was the world of Moritz Thomsen. For countless hours, night and day, he sat at his window, gazing down through the tangle of electric wires and telephone lines on the life below. There, on the trash-littered, crime-ridden streets jammed with noisy polluting trucks and cars, he could see "enough free and very wild behavior to keep from wasting way with homesickness." Loiterers and pedestrians milled against a backdrop of rusty facades, buildings weathered by the humid tropical climate. Hour upon hour, Moritz studied the skinny black boys with shiny white teeth, the withered old men, their eyes yellow and blood-shot, with only a tooth or two left, like the familiar face of that emaciated old gringo peering out of the dark window three stories above. Directly across the street stood an old building that Moritz said looked like "a very bad Greek temple, perhaps built to worship some absolutely powerless old Greek god who had lost his know-how and couldn't do much anyway but curse."

He wrote to the poet Robert Peterson, "My most intimately pondered friends are the dying people I watch from my window eating garbage." He watched the homosexuals, the pimps, the whores, the night watchmen, the young, the old, pursuing all manner of sex. Then one day the building's owner put up an iron fence and gate to keep "those people" off the stone steps and pillared porch. Moritz was indignant. This was his one source of drama. "I resent those welded iron strips that closed the theater across the street. One of those old Greek gods doesn't even want me to look."

Moritz had advanced emphysema for more than a year. He was wasting away. Tim Locke, a personal friend since the 1970s, felt he was "just surviving," that he had given up on life. Another old friend of twenty years said, "He looked like he had AIDS." It took Moritz an hour or more, stopping often and leaning on the banister to rest and cough, to climb the three flights to his room.

Still, he refused Bert's offer to find him a place with an elevator. Moritz used special inhalers and medicines that he sometimes asked Bert to import from the United States for him. Ironically, he continued to smoke. "His ashtray was always full," said Ramoncito, the young black man Moritz helped raise.

He staggered, wheezing and coughing, into the bookstore.

Only rarely now did Moritz laboriously make his way down to the street to sit on the curb for hours. Four weeks before he died, he staggered, wheezing and coughing, into the bookstore. He wore sandals and a tattered short-sleeved cotton shirt. His tired blue eyes peered out through shaggy hair. He collapsed into the chair by Bert's desk. There he sat, a week's stubble on his face, in his dirty, faded khaki pants with holes worn in the knees, and an old dark leather belt pulled tight around his skinny waist. He smoked a Marlboro and talked with Bert a while. At last, he heaved himself up, gasping, gathered up his mail, and shuffled out on the arduous journey home. That was the last time Moritz left his apartment alive.

The moment Moritz knew you cared—you were lost.

Anthropologist Kathryn Coe was one of Moritz's best and oldest friends. "It was hard at times to be friends with Moritz. He rejected what he needed most—love, generosity, compassion, caring—and he could be very cruel...If people didn't know Moritz, they wouldn't believe that Bert and Moritz were friends. Bert knew he had to keep his distance if he was to help Moritz, maintain a face of non-interest. The moment Moritz knew you cared—you were lost. Then you couldn't do anything for him." By rejecting help, Moritz felt himself free of obligation, a character trait that persisted from childhood to his death.

Chekhov.... My God, how I love that man.

To the end, Moritz remained an avid and critical reader. In his final weeks he described William Gass's *On Being Blue* as "high class, tony, elitist art." He liked to read Larry McMurtry. After twenty-five years away from the States, Moritz found his novels "like anthropology. I enjoy him and don't know why." Don DeLillo, he felt, didn't have "*gravitas*." Once warmed up, Moritz let loose: "Bellow has it; he sounds sincere, authentic; there is a real raging man behind Bellow—or Heller—or Roth—have you read Naipaul's *In A Free State* or *The Enigma of Arrival*, that slow-moving glacier of a book that at the end makes you burst into tears? Talk about the dark side of life. I am reading Chekhov for the umpteenth time. My God, how I love that man. Reading over and over a story called "Willi" by Doctorow—marvelous!"

Moritz revised and promoted his own books as long as he was able, but he knew he would never finish the one he was working on. It was, he said, "the kind of thing that could be added to for forty years, if you had the time." His patience wore thin, and he grew anxious, knowing his end was near. He ranted about publishers sitting on his work. When a friend asked what had happened to a manuscript he had sent to a publisher, Moritz exploded, "What happened? This is what has happened: Not a goddamned f—ing thing has happened!" He was impressed, however, when Wallace Stegner asked to see the manuscript: "Imagine that, Wallace himself!"

Though quick to let others read his work, Moritz didn't take criticism well. "He'd bring his manuscripts for me to criticize," Bert remembers. "He'd come and sit by my desk, and we'd bullsh-t. He carried on endlessly about how his father was somehow to blame for all of his problems. I didn't like that and some other things about his writing. We had some terrible arguments." In *My Two Wars*, Moritz chronicles the bitter conflict with his father which tormented him throughout his life.

To the end, Moritz liked to espouse his philosophy, his views on money, art, and morality. He asked a friend, "With the rich enjoying art which the poor do not share, and with the wisdom of Conrad and Proust and Tolstoy to guide their lives, why are they not much better than the half-naked blacks who can hardly read the newspaper? Are people who swoon over Beethoven more moral than those fools dancing the samba beat?"

To another friend, he wrote, "The accumulation of money is as much a disease as AIDS or alcoholism, or syphilis. No one *ever* has enough money. Everyone *with* money thinks that everyone else is trying to steal it. No, there is no correlation between morality and money, though poor people sometimes rob from necessity or the simple rage of taking something from those of us who have everything. Still, if there is no correlation, the dangers of becoming an a—hole with the accumulation of a

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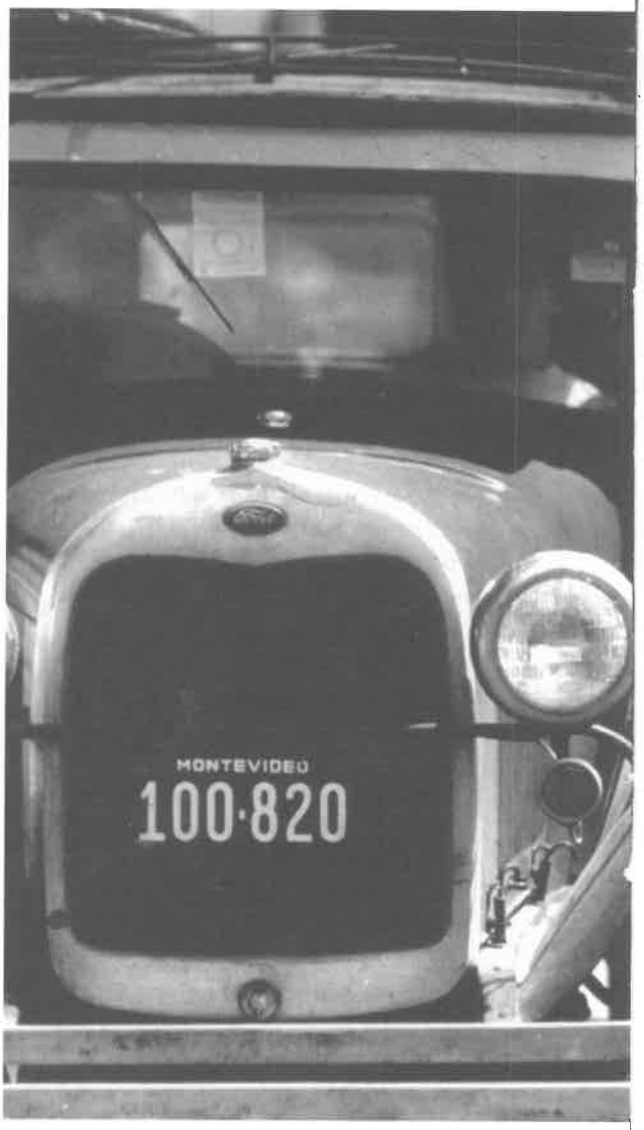
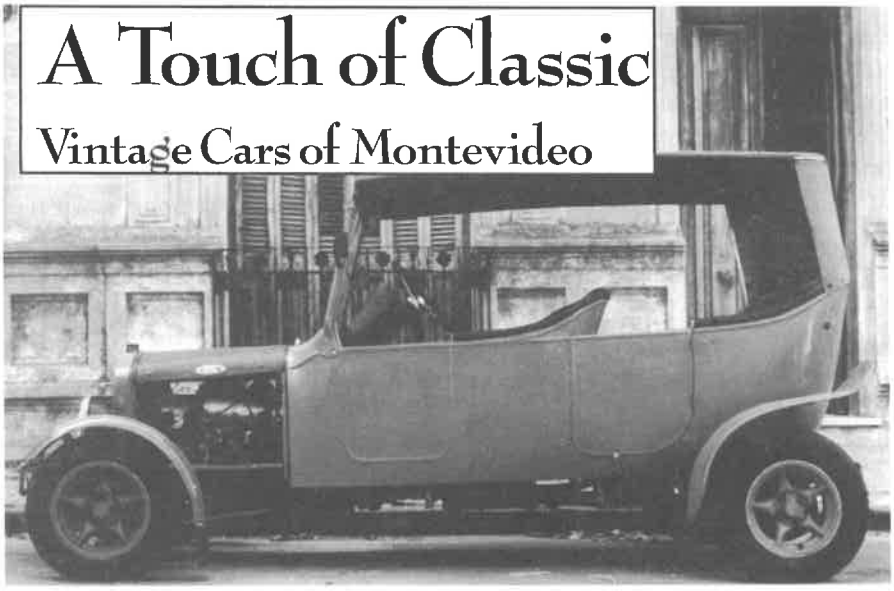


South American Explorer

A Touch of Classic

Vintage Cars of Montevideo



Photos and text by Tom Cockrem

I wander into the local grocery store to buy some fruit. It's an ancient building. The fruits and vegetables seem to be growing in their wooden crates. All around, odd bottles and tins hold curious trinkets that look like they have been there since the shop opened. A man with two empty Coke bottles, liter size, drops in. The proprietor knows what to do. Producing a giant decanter of dark red wine, he carefully fills the Coke bottles and caps them. Then it's my turn. Turned off by the moldy fruit, I ask for some beer. It arrives in a dusty old bottle with a cap that doesn't match the label. Was it filled from a decanter, too? No matter, it's cold and tastes pretty good.

In Montevideo, Uruguay's capital, most everything seems old, especially in Ciudad Vieja—the old town. By South American standards, the city is reasonably new, circa early eighteenth century. But it *looks* old. The streets need repair. There's freshly splattered refuse on the pavement. You roam about the streets hoping you won't be underneath when garbage comes hurtling from three floors above

Dilapidated speedometers, gas gauges, magnetos

Montevideo! I came here to find a city that clearly abhors change. Look around. Everywhere, vintage cars: antique Fords (Model T's and A's), curious old trucks, classic 1950s limousines, and more. I stroll aimlessly, looking for more. And just when I think, "Well, that's probably the last I'll see today," around the next corner—another beauty—a sweet Chevrolet, a gallant little Austin, a spruced-up Model T, or an impossibly old jalopy that would, in any other city, occupy a glass case in some museum.

I curse my ignorance of vintage cars as I scour grill, bonnet, and boot for clues to make and model. I trust that enthusiasts back home will be able to put me straight—something to look forward to.

The further you go along the Rambla, a coastal boulevard that leads away from Montevideo, the newer the buildings and the more open space. The final stop, Praya Carrasco, boasts public parks and modern shopping centers, triple-fronted homes and cultivated gardens. There's barely any litter anywhere. Even the cars are new.

On the walk back to Montevideo, the antique cars reappear. There's even a horse-drawn milk cart parked outside a block of flats. I dine in a sidewalk *confiteria* and watch the motor parade. How did this automobile anachronism come about? As I'm leaving the country, I find out.

"It's more than just the economic situation," says Aristides Castagno, a Uruguayan I meet in the airport café. "The people here don't like change," he explains. "They are very conservative. It's...how do you say...idiosyncratic. They love their old cars. You see it in the way they paint them and keep them nice. If they can't find spare parts, they make them in workshops where they keep their cars going. It's a national obsession."

I can still remember my first day in Montevideo. It was Sunday. I was traveling with a Brazilian couple looking to buy antiques. The Feria de Tristan Narvaja is a huge sprawling market that attracts collectors from everywhere. The huge quantity of old car parts—dilapidated speedometers, gas gauges, magnetos, carburators, door handles, rusty engines, radiator caps—aroused my curiosity. "Who would want this junk?" I asked myself.

Now I know.

Tom Cockrem is a travel writer living in Melbourne, Australia. His work has appeared in Australian and New Zealand newspapers and travel and in-flight magazines.

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credit rating should warn people to avoid contacting the disease just as horny young men should avoid sleeping in the beds of syphilitics."

Clearly, for Moritz, "everything" did not refer to just material goods because Moritz lived in greater poverty than some of the people he wrote about. By "everything," Moritz meant knowledge, experience, possibilities, choices, hope, and in his case, being a gringo from North America. Moritz could choose his life and circumstances. This, he felt, placed him in a class of "those...who have everything" as seen through the eyes of the poor.

They found a shoe box in his apartment stuffed with checks totaling some $40,000.

Though enduring a life of poverty during his years in Ecuador, Moritz always had money to help others in need. When he died, some said they found a shoe box in his apartment stuffed with checks totaling some $40,000. He left written instructions for the money. It was to be divided among Ramoncito, his sister Martita, and their uncle Orestes. All three belonged to the black family Moritz had adopted at Rio Verde twenty-five years earlier when he was in the Peace Corps. Ramón Prado, the father of Ramoncito and Martita, and other members of this family all figured in Moritz's first three books. Four years after Moritz died, the three finally received $7,000 each. Said Ramoncito, "I don't know what happened to the rest of it." (When Ramoncito once asked Moritz for airfare to return from Europe, Moritz thought of writing back a full page of ha-ha-ha-ha-has. But in the end, he did come through with the money.)

'Get away from me, you whore!'

Moritz had a dark side to his personality. For some, it was simply meanness. Bert remembers "times when the doctor would try to examine (Moritz), and he would bray 'Get away from me, you whore!' Several times, he kicked her out, but when he cooled down he'd send word for me to please have her come back by. He would say mean things, but was he actually physically violent? I don't think so. He would just isolate himself; that was part of his problem. He was a mean one."

A complex, self-destructive person

Speaking of Moritz, the writer Jo Manning said, "He was a complex, self-destructive person. He could be charming, and I think he wrote like an angel, but he could also be a real bastard and a bully. He pestered me into sending him one of my first fiction efforts. I got a real nasty letter in return which shocked me in its cruelty. I felt he took great delight in jeering at my story. He also quoted the negative comments to his friend in Quito—again, I thought, with delight."

Jo told Moritz how she felt. He wrote back, "I wasn't dumping on you but I certainly learned my lesson: All stories sent here to be read will be world champions from now on—flawless in their sweep, devastating in their power. The tears will flow like the Mississippi in May. I will writhe on the floor, screaming for mercy: Stop it, stop it, you're killing me. God, you can get in trouble just trying to be reasonably reasonable when you find yourself dealing with someone whose creative product (the cross-eyed mongoloid, the kiddy with no arms but two heads, the awful 133 page poem about 'My First Good Lay') presents his gift for your admiration. Jo, you are the sixth person in the last month or so who calls me things like 'brutally honest;' I think I pay a high price to sit here day after day writing 3-4 letters a day to people to whom I give so little pleasure—when that's all I was trying to do. I always dump in the bushes or with the door closed. Pardon the tone. I always feel low when people dump on me. And now I'm going back in the bushes and eat sh-t with the chickens."

Moritz showed his soft side to his adopted Ecuadorian family. He lived long enough to see his grandchildren Martita and Ramoncito grow up and long enough to cradle his six-month-old great grandson Martín in his arms. Martín, Martita's son, was actually named after Moritz, "Martín" being what the black people called Moritz since the time he lived at Rio Verde. Ramoncito was one of the last people to see Moritz alive. "I had just returned from my trip in Europe," said Ramoncito. "I spent nine hours with him. He was so nice. It was great. It was more than great. We talked about his books. We remembered the nice times we had. He told me, 'Don't talk about that. That's over. Think about what's going to happen from now on. Do you like to fly? Do you like to dream?'"

"Don Martín said he would die at any time. Yeah, he knew. I asked him what it was like being old. He said, 'It's so difficult. You will never want to be old. It is a most difficult

time for me. It's difficult, so difficult.' I brought a bottle of French wine and we drank it. Then I went to Quito. I never saw him again. If it hadn't been for Don Martín, I would be like those people in Rio Verde. I love that guy. I love Don Martín. It was so easy to be with him."

With the approach of death, Moritz grew more absolute.

For over a decade, Moritz had seen death coming. More and more it consumed his thoughts until, in his last years, it possessed him. He'd conjure up the places he'd been, how he'd gotten there, what he'd done, how he'd chosen his friends, why he thought the way he did, why he penned the words he wrote. With the approach of death, Moritz grew more absolute—his cynicism, advice, softer side, and crotchety morality all more pronounced.

I am tired of being senile and would prefer to play another game

With his coming death, Moritz lost vitality. In letters, he wrote of the long wait. "I see now that death doesn't arrive at a certain moment with a clang and a batter," he wrote to a friend. "It is simply a slow leak." To another, "I contemplate a visit from you in August with mixed emotions and wondering if I will still be alive. I've been talking like this for ten years and don't die and have to apologize to my friends for lingering on. Lately, however, I don't move around and figure seventy-five is OK. I can leave the party because it's a f—ing drag when it takes thirty minutes to put on your socks...If I get to that point (of sheer exhaustion), I will ask you to leave, not with the idea of being rude but simply trying to hang on to life and not be suspected of suicidal tendencies." And to another friend, "I am tired of being senile and would prefer to play another game...I am at the end, I think, and don't go out even to buy groceries, because I might not be able to get back. This happened a couple of weeks ago and that was humiliating. One hour climbing to my room, and without the groceries... What else? Oh God, nothing? Nothing. I am sleeping myself to death and it's not a bad way to go if you like to remember mountain meadows and sunsets... I think you have never lived as I live now, starving for human and intellectual contacts in complete isolation... Writing, the source of so much pain, I think I'll give up. My gift to humanity—and myself." Then, with time running out, "Yesterday I had more to tell you. Now, today, the mind has gone blank." These are among the last words Moritz wrote.

His adopted daughter, Esther, knew Moritz was dying. She traveled from Quito to be with him. Tears filling her eyes, she told of taking care of Moritz, cooking for him, feeding him, giving him medicines that the doctor prescribed. "I spent nights at his bedside, watching and changing the IV. I was patient."

The doctor came nearly every day now. She wanted him moved to a clinic where she could treat him properly. "It's imperative," she said, "that he gets cleaned up. He needs some fresh air and to build up his immune system." Esther begged him, "Don Martín, let's go to a clinic. I'll take you there. I'll pay for the clinic." He refused, "No. I don't want to go to a clinic."

In moments alone with Esther, Moritz talked about her future, "Esther, take care of Martita and Ramoncito and el niño Martín. Take care of the things you have acquired all these years. If you have some money, don't keep it. Just invest in land and houses, because that's the best way. Take care of the little finca in Esmeraldas (the farm at Tachina which Moritz left to Ramoncito)."

"If God will help me," Esther said.

"Forget Him," Moritz grumbled. "If you don't work, He is not going to give you anything. God is sh-t."

Esther continued, "One afternoon Don Martín said, 'Esther, go get the doctor. I want to pay her.' I went to Libreria Científica and left the message. I was out of the apartment about two hours doing errands, buying groceries. When I returned, the doctor had come and gone. About 5:30, I asked Don Martín what he wanted for supper. He wasn't hungry, but asked for a beer. He drank half of the large bottle and gave me the rest. I made him a small salad, some mashed potatoes, and an egg. He liked his eggs with the yoke raw. He ate just a little bit of everything."

Tears streamed down Esther's cheeks. "Around 11:00 or 12:00 I woke to a loud thump. Don Martín was trying to get to the bed pan. The IV was in his way. He ripped it out and, forgive the bad word, said, 'I don't need this sh-t.' I pleaded, 'Don Martín, no! Please leave that alone. You need it. Let me help you.' But he said, 'I can still do something. I can go to the bathroom myself.' I told him, 'If you can't, just say so, and I'll hold the bed pan for you.' He said, 'No. I still can do it. I can take care of myself.'"

These were the last words he ever spoke. Back in bed, he fell into a

coma and never woke up. Emphysema had finally won. He died on August 28, 1991 at 11:00 P.M.

Many young writers admired Moritz Thomsen. Some journeyed to Ecuador to meet the man who inspired them. Some arrived too late. Mike Tidwell was one. "I had already made plans to be at his house that very day, but my assignment was changed. You can imagine how I felt when I learned he died. I'm not sure if I'm glad or sad that I wasn't there. Maybe I could have helped in some way...a terrible thing."

Esther was with Moritz constantly during his last week. Others came by—the doctor, a man from the bookstore, a friend from Guayaquil. "Someone came from Quito that Wednesday morning when Don Martín was in a coma," she said. "She stayed a while then left." Martita and Ramoncito arrived Thursday after Moritz had already died. Their father, Ramón, also arrived too late to see Moritz. He and Moritz had had a falling out some years before, a quarrel that was never reconciled.

"Don Martín was a simple man," said Esther. "We were like family. We never, never had arguments. We always got along well. He was always like a father to me. I always respected him a lot. My best memory is the way he helped my children and the way he helped me. Everything I have is because of him. That means a lot to me. If I could talk to him tonight, I would say, 'I will never forget you. You are always with me. You were the greatest thing for me." As she spoke, Esther no longer fought back her tears.

After Moritz was cremated, a woman took the ashes to Quito. Said Esther, "She told us some of his ashes would be scattered on Tachina where Don Martín lived. The rest would be scattered in the United States where he grew up. She told us that we would be notified so we could go together to scatter them. I don't know if it happened. We did not see it."

Ramoncito remembered, "Don Martín wanted his ashes put in the river at Viche" where he had a large farm in the 1970's and where he wrote his second book. "He told me that many times. That was really important for me and my sister. Later I was told the ashes had already been put in the river, but I was not allowed to see it. That woman should have told me. She should have told me and my sister, 'Let's go!' She knew where we lived in Quito. She knew."

In other accounts, the ashes were scattered in the river at Tachina or in Rio Verde. An urn holding Moritz's ashes was seen in a home in Quito more than a year after he died.

We may never know what happened to the ashes. Certain it is, however, that these gentle people, the family of Don Martín, lost something—a chance to say a final farewell to their father and grandfather.

Many who knew Moritz are certain that he was not religious. Some who knew him sensed in him a deep spirituality. A few others believe he was a Christian. When Moritz asked Esther to get the doctor that Tuesday afternoon, he wanted something more than just to pay her. When she arrived, he asked her to bring a priest.

After receiving the absolution, Moritz lay back on his pillow. His eyes filled with tears like those coursing down the doctor's cheeks. With a last effort, Moritz gently raised his rough, sun-hardened, farmer's hand to the soft, smooth skin of the doctor's beautiful face. She held it there, and sitting on the bed by him, she leaned in close in response to his caress. Looking into her dark, intelligent eyes, he earnestly implored her, "Continue your work with *los pobres.*"

"I will," she whispered. He smiled. Then, the doctor saw an expression of love and peace spread across his face. "Stay the way you are," he told her. "Don't ever change." Looking at his face, one can imagine that at that moment, Moritz was at peace.

A MEMOIR BY MORITZ THOMSEN
The Saddest Pleasure
A JOURNEY ON TWO RIVERS
By the author of Living Poor and The Farm on the River of Emeralds

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Contnued from page 11

Sheltered by the world-famous Biosphere Reserve, the Machiguenga of the Manu continue to hunt monkeys and other game animals using bows, arrows and hunting medicines. The rich wildlife thrives, protected within the boundaries of the park. Traditional native hunting practices maintain a natural balance.

Here in the rain forest of Manu, the Machiguenga hunt tapir, peccary and monkey using their magical sedges, preserving the secret knowledge of their ancestors, the powerful shamans of mythical times. The spirit of the harpy eagle lives on.

The Claviceps fungus infests the fruit and flower of this Cyperus *sedge—the same fungi from which LSD was isolated.*

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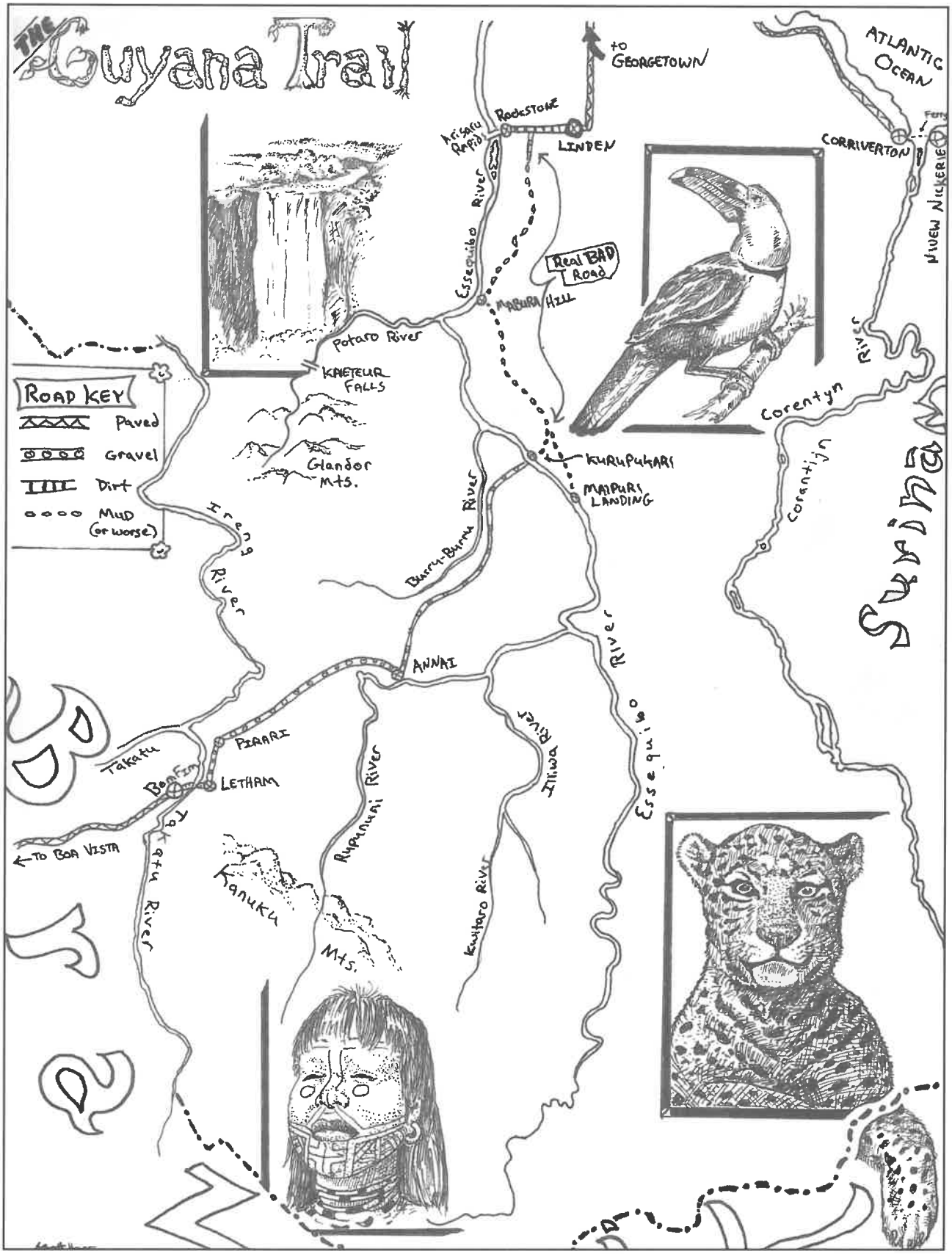

THE Guyana Trail
to GEORGETOWN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Arisaru Rapid
ROCKSTONE
LINDEN
CORRIVERTON
NIUEW NICKERIE
Essequibo River
Real BAD Road
MABURA HILL
Potaro River
KAIETEUR FALLS
Glandor Mts.
ROAD KEY
Paved
Gravel
Dirt
Mud (or worse)
KURUPUKARI
MAIPURI LANDING
Burro-Burro River
Ireng River
Corentyn River
Corantijn
SURINAME
ANNAI
Takatu
Boa Fim
PIRARA
LETHAM
TO BOA VISTA
Rupununi River
Kanuku Mts.
Toka Toka Rivers
Kwitaro River
Rewa River
Essequibo River

Bushwhacked on the Guyana Trail

Text and illustrations by Scott Hoyer

They've run out of ink at Bom Fim.

This, in and of itself, would be just a marginal setback, if it were the only complication I have to deal with as I impatiently dig my toes into the fine latrine dust outside of Roraima States' slap-up eastern border post.

I've taken all possible care making my plans to visit the ex-Cooperative Republic of Guyana. But the Guyanese Embassy in Lima, Peru was "closed for repairs." Then, the American representative in Iquitos thought that Guyana was somewhere in Africa. When I confronted him with a map, he suggested I visit the U.S. Consul in Manaus, Brazil. There, the Ambassador recommended going to Brasilia to get a Guyanese visa. "Or," he bellowed heartily after tossing back another fortifying gulp of Coca Cola, "Just give it a try at the border."

a bargain basement embalming job that couldn't stand up to tropical realities

It's the autumn of '93, and essentially nobody, including the newly elected government of Guyana, knows who to let into their country and under what conditions. There are understandable reasons for this. In 1953, it looked like the elections would sweep Cheddi Jagan, a vocal Marxist, into power and lead the country to independence. Under U.S. pressure, the British colonial authorities rushed in troops to stomp on the electoral process. Eight years later the British eased up a bit and, in the face of objections by the Kennedy administration, in this instance honored the Monroe Doctrine and didn't interfere. Jagan won his third election and launched "internal sovereignty." With an electorate split between the predominantly East Indian PPP of Dr. Jagan and the largely African PNC headed by Forbes Burnham, full independence didn't come about until 1966. The political scene then shifted even more to the left under President Burnham who gained notoriety for chastising superpower delegates at the United Nations, letting loonies like Jim Jones' People's Temple have the run of large tracts of upland jungle, and finally molding when, in an effort to become a Leninist icon, he got a bargain basement embalming job that couldn't stand up to tropical realities. Now, forty years later and a lot less Marxist, Cheddi Jagan is back in power, repatriating North Korean diplomats and dropping hints that American tourists can pick up their visas at the border.

All these facts spin in my head as with sweat-clouded eyes I gaze longingly across the dull green Tacatu River (Hey! That's Guyana twenty meters away!) and listen to a very-low-on-the-totem-pole Policia Federal explain why he can't give me a Brazilian exit stamp:

"There's no ink in the stamp pad," he says. "We asked for a new one a couple of days ago, but it hasn't arrived."

"Really? Then what do you do with people who want to go to Guyana?"

"You're the first person in two weeks who's wanted a stamp. All the rest were just going for a few days so it wasn't a problem. I think it's no problem for you as well."

"Maybe not to cross the border, but I plan to go up to Georgetown and then re-enter Brazil from French Guiana. The Federal Police are certainly going to wonder where I've been between Leticia (Colombia/Brazil) and Oiapoque (French Guiana/Brazil)."

"Hmm. Maybe you should go back to the Federal Police office in town to get a stamp." (Bom Fim is a three mile hike.)

"I was just there. They told me that exit stamps are only issued here at the frontier."

"Then you have to return to Boa Vista to get one." (A four hour bus ride.)

Neither option is practical.

"O.K., how about you just write in my passport that

Scott Hoyer spent six years in Hong Kong acting in and dubbing very bad martial arts films. He now resides in Vicente de Carvalho, Brazil, attempting to recreate the Atlantic coastal forest in his front yard and dreaming of Kazakhstan, of all places.

I left here on this date and sign it?"

"No, I can't take that responsibility. You have to go back to Bom Fim or Boa Vista."

"Then, how about I just write it myself and you sign it?"

"No."

"Fine. I'll just do it myself and you be a witness. Got a pen?"

His pen is also out of ink. *My* pen got swiped in a market in Manaus. I grab a pencil stub and scribble the essentials. "What's your name? I'll even sign it for you."

He raises an eyebrow, lights a cigarette, and busies himself with a meaningless ledger. I forge the name of the Brazilian consul in Iquitos.

The boat landing on the Tacatu is a washed out section of riverbank with a wooden sign that reads "*barco*" nailed on a tree. I feel an urge coming on to complete my clandestine entry into Guyana by swimming across the river. I resist it. Instead, following instructions, I spend a few sultry minutes wading around the shallows hollering "*Barco! Barco!*" Finally, a barely motorized dugout splutters into view and ferries me to Great Britain's former toe-hold on the Americas.

Man-eating things jump on you from the trees at night.

Letham, the Guayanese border town, spills thinly across the dusty cashew veldt before it congeals into a few shops, guest houses, an army post, and the government house at the foot of the airstrip. My first goal is to latch onto some local currency and spend it on some Guyanese beer, which I'd been informed (by an expat Guayanese, mind you) "has twice the strength at half the price" of Brazilian *cerveja*. Alas, in Letham we're so far from the coastal hub that Banks—the national label brewed in Georgetown—rarely seeps this far into the hinterlands. I have to make do with a couple of costly little cans of some Venezuelan beer with polar bears on them.

I head for my next port of call: the government mansion—a big, spindly, two-story affair with a breezy veranda and doors that don't quite fit their frames. Mr. Moore, the immigration official, smiles indulgently at my excuse for lacking a Brazilian exit stamp, then asks if I have plane tickets to Georgetown and out of the country. I don't. I'm planning to take a truck to Georgetown and then go overland to Suriname, I explain. I figure two, not more than three, weeks will be plenty of time.

"So you're going to take the Guyana Trail," he chuckles.

"That's what I've planned. I hear they've opened up a road."

"Road's there all right. Pretty rough, though. Sure you don't want to fly?"

"No, I prefer my adventures on land. Have you ever taken the route?"

"You wouldn't catch *me* out there. Man-eating things jump on you from the trees at night."

There's bad things jumpin' out of those trees.

Just then, a sturdy looking fellow from a neighboring desk pipes up. "I took the Trail once down from George. Wouldn't do it again. He's not kidding. There's bad things jumpin' out of those trees."

"Then I can expect to see some Guyanese wildlife?" I smile optimistically.

"Oh, yeah. Real up close." Mr. Moore chuckles again, stamping a thirty-day visa into my passport.

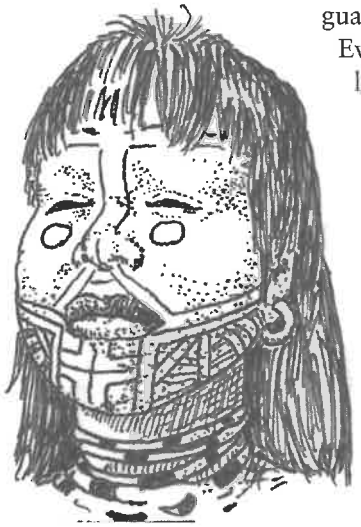
I have to laugh a bit myself as I stow my gear in a large, hot, fanless, antiquated room in the Tacatu Guesthouse. I'm sufficiently familiar with Latin American zoology to know that the only animal in Guyana that can jump out of a tree at night and eat a human is the jaguar. I'm not worried about jaguars. More people by far have died flying Air Guyana than from spotted, truck-stalking felines. Poisonous snakes and insects are another story. Real-life perils are already flitting about my room. Of course, I started the standard anti-malarial regimen in Lima before journeying down the upper Amazon more than a month ago. But it doesn't provide protection against all the malarial strains known to lurk in the jungles of Guyana. I start swatting.

Rasta sheep (complete with dreadlocks and stoned expressions) swaying to the reggae beat

Letham's tourist attractions can be pretty much exhausted in one day—and that includes a Saturday night

out at the Double Wheel, the only dance hall in town. After *five* days, even the most ingeniously inventive traveler will get desperate. Every day starts out on a hopeful note as I awake to a cashew- and primrose-colored sunrise and the neighbor's stereo belting out "My Lollipop Stick." I wander out into the courtyard, past the Rasta sheep (complete with dreadlocks and stoned expression) swaying to the reggae beat, and set off into the savannah in search of a natural breakfast.

Astonished and delighted, I've discovered that all those scrubby broadleaf trees I've seen whisking past the bus window on the plains around Boa Vista are in fact cashew trees, and here at Letham, they are in full fruit. Just a few days ago, while nosing about a market in Manaus, I didn't even know that cashew trees produced anything but a pricey nut. But here I am in the midst of an orchard, surrounded by the succulent, pendulous, bell-shaped fruits that stretch away through three countries. This situation calls for tough decisions: Should I pick a red fruit first or a yellow one? Maybe garnish my repast with a slice of wild lemon? Follow this meal up perhaps with a handful of *dongs* (a small plum-like wild fruit) or Acerola cherries? Ought I to linger a few weeks more until the mangoes ripen? Such moments as these give rise to musings in my diary about someday retiring in Letham, whiling away my twilight years brewing tropical cocktails and cheerily exchanging greetings each morning with the town's friendly inhabitants. But such visions of happiness wither in the oven of the midday savannah sun, during expeditions to the local Indian villages, or in search of *cari* (home-brew cashew beer). Nor do they revive with dusk's first cool stirrings of breeze that make it possible to move about once more, but bring in their train the blood-sucking aerial hordes. The champagne of morning optimism ferments into midday lethargy, and by evening sours with the dregs of desperation and the desire to escape.



The Tacatu Guesthouse is a mosquito-infested sauna. The bar near the airport is the only place in town where there's a slight breeze that holds the bug population marginally at bay. It's here I retire every evening to inquire about trucks going north and where I can down enough Banko wine and Antarctica beer to make sleep an endurable option. The town swarms (by Lethamite standards, at least) with chaps from Operation Raleigh out on volunteer stints. Most of them are stationed with civil engineering or agricultural development projects further out in the bush. They have to travel a bit more to escape the mosquitos and find a cold beer. Guyana is popular with them—it's one of the few locales in the third world where their skills are appreciated and they don't have to learn another language.

In addition to English (spoken with a very pronounced Guyanese accent), Guyana has its own unique idiom—Taki-taki—a melange of European, African, Native American, and Asian languages that is also spoken in neighboring Suriname and French Guiana. But the Guyanese pride of being an English Speaking Nation borders on English-language chauvinism.

"Of course we all speak Taki-taki here in the bush because we grew up talking with the Indians and all," explains Milton. "But English is the only language Guyana really needs." Milton, the owner of the bar, speaks to a group of us sitting around a wobbly hardwood table. Steve from Bristol nods his assent, chomping on a strip of Brazilian beef jerky. "It's the language of international trade and commerce. Everybody should learn *some* English, at least," he lectures.

"But doesn't everything here in Letham come from a Portuguese-speaking country?" I ask, pouring another round of Brazilian beer.

"Oh, sure," confirms Milton as, with his foot, he rolls a stray Brazilian onion back into its bin. "I'd say ninety percent of our stuff is from Brazil, and what we get from Venezuela comes through Brazil, too."

"Since there are 140 million Brazilians just over the river, and since you couldn't live here without all the things you get from Brazil, don't you think you should learn Portuguese as well?"

Milton frowns thoughtfully for a second. "Nah. If they want to do business with us, they can learn some English, too. Right, guys?" he asks, addressing the two Brazilian traders at the table.

"Claro. Falamos ingles," nods one, rolling his eyes while the other passes around slices of a heavy, ruddy-orange gel from a round metal tin.

"Como se chama isto?" I ask, tasting the tart guava-cinnamon wedge.

"Goiabada. É muito popular no Brasil mas o Guyanese não conhecem. Que gostoso, não?"

"Sim."

"What?" say Steve and Milton.

Eventually, after half a dozen false alarms and just when I begin to wonder if I couldn't get to Georgetown faster by walking around and entering the country from Suriname, the north-bound express rumbles up to the guesthouse gate in the pre-dawn murk. I'd seen the trucks roaring about town in the preceding days—big Swedish lorries over a yard off the ground with cab doors nearly twice as high, specially built for jungle travel.

Climbing aboard, I know I'm in for some hard travel; live bodies are stuffed around the cargo. Passenger service is obviously an afterthought. Still, I didn't expect the freight to include a ferryboat engine. Passenger space is minimal and, because of that machine, hard and pokey. There are five of us in passenger class. Drowsy, we wrestle for snatches of repose jammed up against the canopy roof, stabbed by a malign boat motor from below, smothered by truck exhaust from up front, clouds of dust from behind, and sticky heat all 'round.

Around about 8:00 A.M. and approaching the Pakaraima hills, we stop at a ranch. We drop off the only comfortable cargo we have—several sacks of beans—and pick up a whopping large shank of beef. While strapping the meat to the top of the truck cab, Gary, a rare combination of India Indian father, American Indian mother, and Indiana name who has traveled this trail before, suggests we climb up and sit *on* the canopy. It's a splendid idea that utterly transforms our trip. Above it all, we revel in unlimited leg room, reclining luxuriously on pliant canvas, riding happily in front of the eructating exhaust stacks, the dust of the road but a dainty salmon haze to the rear, a forty mph breeze slapping away the heat and humidity. To our right, the cashew veldt worms its way northeast towards Suriname. To the left rise the Pakaraima uplands. These break the Caribbean trade winds which dislodge their moisture on the northern half of Guyana. They herald our approach to the real jungle with green-bearded, up-thrust pinnacles and a gently undulating verdant haze leaning out to cushion our headlong momentum. I've heard of mud deeper than the headlights on a truck, listened to stories of perilous river crossings, and been warned (of course) about those bad things in the trees. But as we thunder past Annai toward Kurupukari on the Essequibo river, the roadbed firm and graded under our tires, the azure sky above, and a cornucopia of bird life bursting out on all sides, I begin to wonder if perhaps I've not been the object of some widespread collective hoodwinking.

At Kurupukari, the space-hogging boat engine is finally hauled out and installed in the ferry. Thereupon we roll onto the ferry, and the "trail" part of the Guyana Trail begins with a vengeance.

Unlike the massive cutting and burning that went into building the Trans-Amazonian highway, the Guyanese simply hacked a one-lane rut through the jungle, slapped together a few log bridges, and left everything else as it was. I'm anticipating old growth canopy forest, cathedral vaults of ancient greenery arching overhead abounding in monkeys, boas, insects, parrots—the whole jungle documentary retinue. Well, there are some bloody big trees around, but I guess I somehow overlook the multi-level tropical canopy forest.

Riding on top of the truck, I discover the first canopy is about chest level when I get a quick, cruel introduction to "the bad things in the trees." Armed with a branch, Gary, who prefers vicious foliage to stifling trucks, coaches me on what to look out for—breast-level limbs and big purple sticker vines. Also hazardous are the brown clumps on hanging branches. The clumps signal that there are stinging ants inside a hollow limb. It's a bad idea to have a metropolitan ant freeway crack over your head. Those delicate feathery leaves twining through the trees are something else to watch out for. That's razor grass, and very aptly named. Sometimes the canopy really is forty feet high. Even then beware of liana creepers that, like baseball bats on a rope, hang down at headthwacking height—very hard to spot coming at you at 25 mph in the twilight gloom.

Once you have eaten the meat of the *labba* and drunk of the black water stream, you are destined to return to Guyana.

Of course, there's more than just "bad things in the trees." An escort of iridescent indigo butterflies the size of my hand accompany us throughout the day. Birds and simians screech as we invade their privacy. Once, after nightfall, I duck to avoid a blue and yellow kingfisher dazzled senseless by the truck's headlights.

The road has turned into a slippery slough with mud five feet deep in places. The two trucks take turns extricating each other from the mire and winching themselves up slippery inclines. Some bridges are really just two logs over a turbid, roiling creek. The drivers negotiate these obstacles

with consummate skill and daring, but at about 9:00 P.M., we're confronted with a river crossing of truly Satanic inspiration. It starts out as a forty-degree mud slope dropping down to three logs cabled together unevenly, then veers abruptly to the left to continue uphill for forty more yards of nearly meter deep mud before reaching even a hint of solid ground. This stretch will have to wait for daylight.

The truck crew slings their hammocks under their vehicles, leaving the rest of us running around to beg for flashlights, search for ant-free shelter, or endure the bulges and swelter in the truck canopy. The crew laughs when we ask about malaria. They've all had it—and several different strains, at that. Just the day before, a soldier at Kurupukari died of one of the nastier varieties.

The next morning, after a meager breakfast of some *dongs* I picked up in Annai and a couple of sips from my last liter of water, we set about winching the trucks through the mire and over the creek. There are a couple of hairy moments—wheels over the rim, disaster averted by a trusty winch cable—but the worst is over. By mid-morning, we reach the placer mine encampment at Ituni. We gorge on fresh papaya and trade gossip with a truck crew coming from the other direction. I get a tour of the mining operations from Chris, a Canadian fellow sent by the investors to check out just what the hell they've bought. It doesn't look too promising. Late in the afternoon, we bathe ourselves and our vehicles in a tea-colored river. Then we leave the mud behind for good and head for civilization.

Much more relaxed now, the truckers regale us with tales of the road and tropical diseases they've had, while throwing in the usual dubious factoid or two—e.g. the population ratio in Guyana is nine women for every man, the alcohol content of Banks beer is 9 percent. I've come across this myth of the highly skewed men-to-women ratio quite a lot in Latin America, and while such a disparity may be the case in some village or district where the men have left for jobs in the city, I suspect it's really just a convenient excuse for philandering. Nine women to one man is a population figure that has not existed on a country-wide level in South America since 90 percent of the adult male population in Paraguay got butchered in the War of the Triple Alliance.

the shrimpiest beer on the continent

More charming and plausible than the nine-to-one ratio is the old Guyanese saw, "Once you have eaten the meat of the *labba* and drunk of the black water stream, you are destined to return to Guyana." A *labba*, it turns out, is the *paca* or *cavy*, a cousin of the better-known capybara and resembles (if the taxidermal montrosity in the Georgetown museum is anything like it) a blotched dun-and-cream watermelon on legs. In the Guyana jungles, the foliage slow-brews in pools, turning the water into a sun tea laden with tannins and other dark particulates. People drink it all the time without fatal results. After two days in the jungle with only two liters of water, I'm working up a pretty good thirst, but I decide to hold out for the 9 percent beer.

The return to civilization is jarring, rude, clumsy, and overbearing. Surrounding the city, the tentacles of the great timber industry octopus have scarred the pristine forest. To avoid police hassles, we now have to ride inside the trucks and endure the dust and fumes. Soon the road blocks appear, requiring I.D. checks and the interminable waiting around while the Authority of the State preens and prances and makes itself a burden to everyone. In the gathering dusk, we're still eight hours of bureaucratic fiddle-faddle away from cozy beds in Georgetown. I watch a line of eight street lights blink into life on the only paved street in this nowheresville army check point *cum* logging camp. I gratefully engulf my first, frosty, genuine Banks beer. Incidentally, it's not 9 percent. It's 4 percent and, at 200 ml per bottle, about the shrimpiest beer on the continent. This works out as slightly more expensive than beer in Brazil. Guess you can't believe everything you hear.

I didn't swill any river water or tuck into a *labba*, but I wouldn't be too surprised if I find myself back in the rivers and forests of Guyana. Someday.

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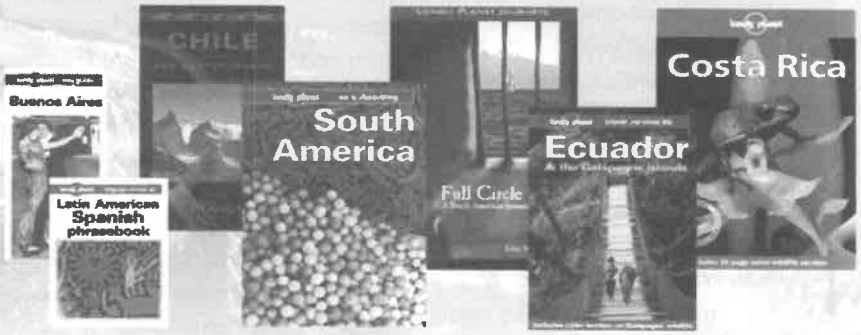
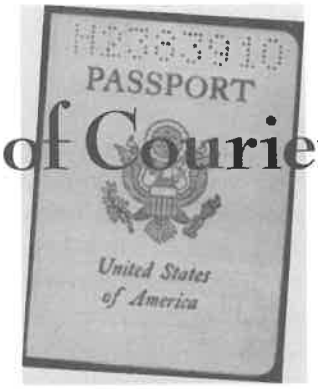


The Ups and Downs of Courier Travel



By Maureen Magee

In my favorite travel fantasy, I wander out to the airport on any old day, idly choose a destination, board a plane, and go.

Spontaneous, impulsive, carefree...and *very* expensive. Which is why it was a fantasy, until recently. Then I heard of the Air Courier Association (ACA).

ACA serves businesses around the world that need to transport supplies, contracts, and various parcels as fast as possible. Passenger planes are about the quickest way to get something anywhere in the world. The trouble is, international air regulations prohibit shipping anything on a passenger plane without someone to accompany it. That's when former airline pilot Steve Elisberg came up with a solution: Offer discount tickets to people willing to give up their regular baggage allowance. Voila! Courier travel was born.

Are they using me to smuggle loot?

Even as an air courier, you get to take a small personal bag with you on the plane. Sometimes you also have to carry a manifest, other documents, or baggage claims that you turn in to a company representative when you arrive. Other times, you don't have to do anything at all.

Let's say you're of a curious turn of mind. The obvious question then is "Just what is in those parcels, anyway?" or "Are they using me to smuggle loot?" The answer? "No." Courier shipping is highly legitimate, as any airline employee or customs agents will attest. All paperwork takes place in customs, so there's no hanky-panky.

As courier flying caught on, it became widely touted as *the* way for budget-minded travelers to see the world. Of course, you can expect discounts when you reserve flights weeks or months ahead. But the Air Courier Association claims you can do even better flying as a courier. And, if you wait until the last minute before boarding a flight—and aren't overly fussy about where it's going—you can get astonishing deals: $350 round-trip, Miami/Montevideo! $150 round-trip, New York/Paris! Subscribers to "Free and Footloose," the Newsletter of the ACA, read about such things as the traveler offered a FREE ticket to Manila if he'd leave the next day.

"All right," I think. "I'm hooked and ready to boogie!" This is as close as I'll ever get to my fantasy. I fork over my dues, pocket my official "Registered Air Courier" membership card, dust off my carry-on, and surrender to the alluring enchantments of South and Central America.

But wait—is it really that simple? Well, not quite.

You can't find a courier flight just anywhere. Only nine North American cities are so-called "gateways" (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Chicago, New York, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Miami), and you only get courier flights at gateways. Now, it so happens I live in Calgary. For me to get to South America, I have to get to either New York or Miami. Well, that puts a wet blanket on the old spontaneity. Still, I'm nothing if not flexible. Also, from my trusty ACA catalog, I learn many regional airlines offer air couriers price breaks between their hometowns to gateway cities. Hmm. That means I should be able to hop a discount Calgary–Vancouver flight, take a bus to Seattle, and pick up a flight to Miami.

How cosmopolitan! How daring! How spirited!

Well, not quite. After forty-five minutes calling various no-name airlines to hopscotch my way across North America, I develop major brain cramps. It looks like I'll have to take three or four flights on different airlines to reach Miami. The clerks at the ticket counter aren't at all

Maureen Magee, Registered Air Courier, has wandered the world via bike, horse, tractor, and sled, to say nothing of more mundane transport. She currently hangs out in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, earns a living decorating log cabins and igloos, and generally freezes to death eight months of the year.

that wild about helping me piece together this patchwork—they aren't travel agents, after all. My travel agent is no help, either. Why should she sort out the mess? There's no commission in it for her. Worse, whatever I save on all these flights I'll need to spend on hotels, buses, and food. And, that's not even taking into account the *stress*...

On to Plan B.

I set my travel agent to look into Calgary/Miami airfares. After all, if I'm going to get the flight to South America for next to nothing, why not spend a little more on this end? Besides, think of all the air-mile points I'll accumulate—enough to pay my way to a gateway city the *next* time I go courier!

As I'm waiting to hear from my agent, I think of something unpleasant. What if, after all this, it's too late to get a visa? And *which* countries require a visa, anyway?

There are courier flights from Miami to fourteen South American cities. Before you take off, however, bear in mind that South American countries change visa requirements at the drop of a hat. I am reluctant to trust the usual guidebooks for accurate, up-to-the-minute information and spend several days researching the subject.

Good news! Canadians only need visas for Brazil, Uruguay, and Nicaragua. Even better, in Miami, you can get a visa in twenty-four hours.

Well, not quite.

At this point, spontaneity is rather out the window. If I put any more planning into this project, I could qualify to supervise a space launch.

My travel agent calls. She's come up with a good fare. I perk up. Just think! I'll soon be sitting in Miami with all of South and Central America at my feet, waiting for me to explore—practically free!

Well, not quite.

In Miami, I call the first of four courier companies. They don't have any discount fares for the winter. At the second company, the computer's down; they can't tell me anything for a day or two. The third company has a courier flight to Buenos Aires, but can't get me back in time for my connecting flight back to Canada. Hope is dwindling when I dial Trans-Air Systems (TAS). I luck out. There are two flights leaving in the next couple of days. The first goes to Guatemala; the second flies to Ecuador with a return date three weeks later. My heart is pumping—this is the rush, the devil-may-care feeling I longed for! I mentally roll the dice and choose Ecuador—a decision of the moment to jet off to another continent. How cosmopolitan! How daring! How spirited!

"How much?" I ask. They quote me a figure fifty dollars higher than the regular price.

"But that's *more* than the listed price!" I squeal.

"High season," I'm told offhandedly. (Who could have guessed Ecuador would even *have* a high season?)

"But the flight—it's leaving in two days—isn't there a discount for booking at the last minute?"

"No."

"Are you sure? I might not buy a ticket for that amount, but I would if it were less." (Note: This is the ploy the ACA recommends for getting an extra discount.)

"No. Do you want the ticket or not?"

Well, gosh, I've come this far, and I sure don't want to hang around Miami for the next three weeks waiting for my return flight. I grudgingly take out my credit card.

Courier companies don't take credit cards. Somehow, the Air Courier Association failed to mention this rather vital piece of information in any of its literature.

A major migraine is coming on.

Several hours and some costly taxi rides later, I find a bank and get some cash. Then, climbing into another cab, I head for TAS, a small cubbyhole in the industrial district near the airport. Here, after giving them money, I get my itinerary and meet Auro, the courier representative. He will be in the airport tomorrow before my flight. Luckily, at 6'4", he'll be easy to spot, even in the manic Miami airport. I spend the rest of my day boning up on Ecuador.

At the appointed hour, I am at the airport. Forty-five minutes later, I'm still at the airport but not all that worried that there's no Auro—courier reps are notorious for this. I finally spy him towering

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above the crowds. He takes my passport and frequent flyer card, promising to be back in five minutes, then disappears to get my boarding pass. Twenty minutes later he reappears, making jokes. "They've canceled your flight," he says. I'm cool, I don't bite. The razzing goes on as he returns my passport and hands me my boarding pass. He lopes off before I realize he still has my frequent flyer card. I look at my boarding pass. Uh, oh. They haven't registered my frequent flyer number. Oh, well. It could be worse. I can take care of it later on. This is the great moment I've been waiting for—I'm at the airport and ready to take off for South America.

There's no paperwork and no one to meet in Quito. All I have to do is get my body on the plane like Auro said. A regular ticket, Miami/Quito goes for between $385 (with many restrictions) to over $600. My ticket is $285. Settling down into my seat, enjoying the same service as my fellow passengers, I congratulate myself and smugly reflect on all the money I'm saving.

The holiday is almost over. I'm glad I'm going home—South America proved more of an adventure than I planned. Also, I have a terrible cold, and I've run out of money. I call the TAS Quito office to confirm my return flight on December 21 and get instructions for meeting the rep.

Arriving at the airport at six in the morning, I find he's right on time. He doesn't speak any English, but then, neither did anyone else I met in Ecuador. I hand him my passport and money for my exit fee, and he goes off to get my boarding pass. The routine seems the same. Well, not quite.

With the airport seething with Christmas holiday traffic, you could get trampled to death. I see the rep waving frantically from the ticket counter. Worming my way past the guard with the bullet-proof vest and rifle, I reach the pleasant, English-speaking ticket agent. "But you don't have a reservation," he says.

I look to the courier rep for an answer. He shrugs and shakes his head—he doesn't understand. I show the ticket agent my itinerary. "It doesn't mean anything," he insists. "It's the ticket that counts." But couriers never even *see* a ticket—they're only given boarding passes. Luckily, after searching around, the ticket agent discovers that I have a reservation after all. Unfortunately, it's for a flight departing two days from now—too late to make my connection back to Canada.

"You can change the reservation," he tells me, "but there's a $150 penalty."

"But it's not *me* who's changing it," I protest. "It's the *courier company's* mistake. Call them!"

"It's 6:30 on a Saturday morning," he says. "No one is there."

Refusing to budge and blocking those in line behind me, I demand to speak to a supervisor. Forty-five minutes go by. Finally, I'm offered a lower penalty and a promise I'll be put on standby. Standby?! Big deal! It's three days before Christmas. There's no chance in hell I'll get to Miami on *standby*. I lean into the face of my pleasant ticket agent, my congested chest heaves spasmodically in a death rattle, my nose drips, and I grasp a sodden Kleenex. Clutching him, I screech, "I have no money! If you don't get me out of here on the next plane, I'm moving in with *you*!"

Never underestimate the power of a cranky Canuck. Forty minutes later, I am boarding my flight to Miami.

Eventually, I get my $50 back from TAS. My frequent flyer card never turns up, and my "points" are still in limbo.

My courier flight cost me $350 more than if I'd booked the flight in advance.

I have written, phoned, and faxed Steve Elisberg, President of the Air Courier Association, telling him of my ordeal. He hasn't replied.

In the meantime, the mailman delivered the latest issue of "Free and Footloose." It teems with inspirational stories of couriers who had "no problems." Perusing the tips, I learn that "In most cases, you pay a lot less traveling in the winter" (Oh?) and "TAS has postponed all flights indefinitely. Remove them from Chapter 5 of your ACA Operations Manual" (*Now* you tell me...).

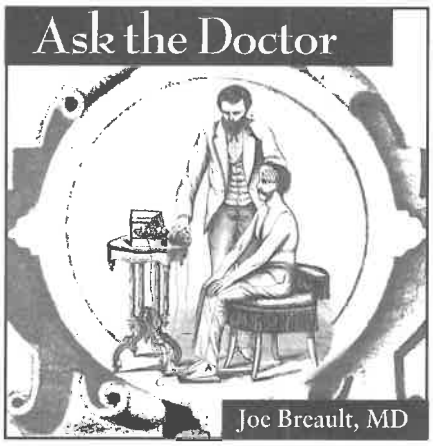
Was it just my luck?

Maybe.

Am I raring to fly the skies again, gearing up for my next courier flight?

Not quite.

The Air Courier Association can be reached at (303) 279-3600, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday to Friday, Mountain Time.
Fax: (303)278-1293.
Mail: 191 University Blvd. Suite 300, Denver, CO 80206.



Dr. Joseph Breault graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine with combined MD and MPHTM (Tropical Medicine) degrees. Currently the staff physician at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, he has previously worked at the PHS Indian Hospitals in South Dakota and overseas in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Diarrhea

Q: I'm taking my two children and pregnant wife to Latin America. The last time we went, we got diarrhea. Is there anything we should do?

A: Prior to your trip, consult your doctor and get your prescriptions filled. Pregnant women, the very young, those with allergies, and those on prescription medications require special attention. Their situation may be more complex and the consequences of negligence more hazardous.

Q: Does everybody get diarrhea?

A: No. Diarrhea only afflicts about 20-30 percent of travelers to developing countries. Diarrhea is typically associated with an increase in (sometimes double) the number of loose bowel movements, sometimes accompanied by abdominal cramps, nausea, bloating, urgency, fever, and malaise. It usually begins abruptly and goes away on its own. Ten percent of cases last more than a week. Fever or bloody stools or both are common in about 5 percent of Traveler's Diarrhea (TD) cases.

Q: What causes TD?

A: Consuming fecally contaminated food or drink.

Q: What can I do to prevent it?

A: Take obvious precautions. The saying "boil it, peel it, cook it...or forget it" is still the best advice when dealing with food or drink. Also, don't brush your teeth with contaminated water.

The drug of choice for prevention is bismuth subsalicalate (Pepto-Bismol), two tablets taken four times a day. It should be continued for two days after returning home, but it is probably not wise to take this drug for more than three weeks. Don't take antibiotics to prevent diarrhea because of the side effects (skin rash is common, and though rare, fatal side effects do occur). Contrary to common belief, lactobacilli will not protect you. Nor will anti-motility drugs such as Imodium or Lomotil. Indeed, these increase your chance of getting diarrhea and reduce your sense of well being.

Q: If I come down with diarrhea, what should I do?

A: Mild TD eventually goes away. You should drink sufficient fluids and be careful about what you eat and drink. Dehydration is potentially fatal. Even if you're vomiting, drink fluids—drinking small amounts frequently usually works. Eat small snacks often, but avoid caffeine and milk products. Don't go without food—you'll need the nutrients to speed repair of membrane damage caused by TD.

Q: Should I drink lots of water?

A: Drinking plain water is not a good idea. Although sodium and potassium must be replaced, the usual drinks found around the house are too low in electrolytes. You can pick up packets of electrolytes for oral rehydration at a drug store. Mixed with boiled water, these are ideal for electrolyte replacement. Oral rehydration solutions also contain glucose and amino acids, both thought to accelerate water absorption. Once made, the rehydration solution should be refrigerated or discarded after 4–6 hours.

Q: What if my condition continues or gets worse?

A: To treat mild to moderate TD, take Imodium or 30 cc of regular strength Pepto-Bismol every half-hour for four hours. Pepto-Bismol liquid can cut trips to the bathroom by half. Loperiamide (Imodium) has been shown to be more effective than Pepto-Bismol. Lomotil, on the other hand, generally has more side effects and may not be as effective as Imodium. Note: Neither Imodium nor Lomotil should be taken if you have bloody mucoid stools or high fever. If there is no improvement in 48 hours, discontinue treatment. Finally, avoid adsorbents such as kaolin and pectin (Kaopectate). These treat the stool, not the patient and do not relieve diarrhea, decrease stool frequency, or ease abdominal pain.

Severe diarrhea, especially if accompanied by fever and bloody, mucoid stools, can be treated with an antibiotic. The more severe your diarrhea, the more crucial it is that you receive proper oral rehydration. Three days of Cipro or Noroxin is the usual treatment because more than half of TD is due to enterotoxigenic E. coli and another 15 percent to shigella. Both respond to these drugs. Children and pregnant women should not take these drugs, however. The recommended alternative is TMP/SMX (Bactrim, Septra).

Q: At what point should I seek medical advice?

A: Bloody mucoid stools, high fever, or continued symptoms after three days on antibiotics are warning signs. Seek local medical advice immediately. In many countries, you can get a stool analysis done at a laboratory. If the results for E. histolytica or giardia are positive, take metronitazole (Flagyl). If there's no laboratory where you are, and amoebas or giardia is common in the area, take metronitazole (Flagyl) anyway. It may be useful. But remember: Do not drink alcohol while taking this drug—the combination will make you very sick. Metronitazole can also be used to treat the rare case of antibiotic-associated psuedomembraneous colitis caused by C. difficile.

See your doctor if, after your return home, you experience on-going, severe TD. Proper diagnosis of your condition may require appropriate tests.

You can e-mail medical questions to Dr. Breault at **joebreault@worldnet.att.net.**
A selection of questions will be answered and published in future issues of the *South American Explorer.*

SAEC in cyberspace
http://www.samexplo.org

Q: I love the Traveler's Bulletin Board on the South American Explorers Club web site! Is there any way I can post a reply to a question?

A: Ask and you shall receive...we've had a lot of requests for a way to reply to Traveler's Bulletin Board postings, so we've created a "Post/Reply" function. It works like this: Each posting has a unique number. To reply, click on the "Post/Reply" link and type the number of the posting you want to respond to. Your reply will appear immediately below the original message.

Q: I'm planning a trip to Ecuador and Peru. Are there any areas I should avoid?

A: Read our new Travel Advisories and Warnings section. We continually update this with any U. S. Department travel warnings, adverse weather conditions, reports on robberies, disease outbreaks, and more.

Q: Are all trip reports posted on the web?

A: Not yet...but getting handwritten trip reports on-line in the near future is in the works. Right now, members post new trip reports on the SAEC website daily. Remember to post your own report when you return from your journey!

PBS Manu Web Site
http://www.pbs.org/edens/manu/

Intrigued by the Machiguenga of Manu featured on page 8? This site offers fabulous photographs and fact-filled information on Manu National Park's people, flora and fauna, history, and conservation efforts. Bonus: You can even quiz yourself on Manu trivia section or download a Manu screen saver!

Guarani Home Page
http://merece.uthscsa.edu/gram/guarani/index-eng.html

Everything you wanted to know about Guarani, the indigenous language that's one of the official languages of Paraguay. The Guarani Home Page offers an interactive dictionary which translates German or Spanish into Guarani, a mini-course on pronunciation, the history of the Guarani people, and a description of Guarani mythological figures.

The Long Drive to South America
http://www.well.com/user/dreyer/SAtrip.html

Planning to tour South America by car? Already read *Central and South America by Road* and the *South American Explorers Club Driving Packet*? Then read the great account of Jon Dreyer's 31,000 mile drive to and around South America. On this site, Dreyer includes the vehicle documentation you'll need, driving tips, photographs, maps of his route, and many lively anecdotes.

Air Courier Association Home Page
http://www.aircourier.org/

Is air courier travel accurately described in "The Ups and Downs of Courier Travel" (p. 29)? Check out the Air Courier Association Home Page and decide for yourself! The Air Courier Association Home Page answers frequently asked questions, tells you how to sign up with the ACA, and shows you the how to get round-trip tickets for $100...or even FREE.

Total Solar Eclipse of February 26, 1998
http://planets.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse

Don't be left in the dark about the February 1998 eclipse. A total eclipse of the sun will be visible from a narrow corridor across the Western Hemisphere, including northern South America and the Caribbean Sea. This NASA site offers general information, weather prospects for the day of the eclipse, and best of all, pictures of what the eclipse will look like from hundreds of cities around the world.

The Official Aconcagua Home Page
http://www.aconcagua.com.ar

Before making a 6960 m (22,835 ft) summit attempt on Mt. Aconcagua, get the latest information on the "Stone Sentinel" from the Official Aconcagua Home Page. A colorful, up-to-date site with info on the best guides, how to hire mules, where to stay in Mendoza, maps, health tips on the psycho-physical effects of climbing, an Aconcagua chat room, and details on how to get your climbing permit on-line.

The Tropical Rainforest in Suriname
http://www.euronet.nl/users/mbleeker/suriname/suri-eng.html

Take a multimedia tour through the rainforest in Suriname. Read about the plants, animals, and Indians, view a multitude of photos capturing the ecological diversity of the area, and listen to haunting sounds from the jungle canopy. A perfect site for armchair adventurers—and you won't even have to take pills for malaria.

Responsible Coffee Campaign
http://www.greenbuilder.com/mader/ecotravel/coffeeag/campaign.html

Wake up, smell the coffee, and find out how you can support growing coffee under more socially and environmentally responsible conditions. The Responsible Coffee Campaign web site shows the impact of coffee production, relates stories about actual situations, recommends further reading, and lists companies that sell alternative coffee in the United States.

ABYA YALA NEWS

Journal of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC)

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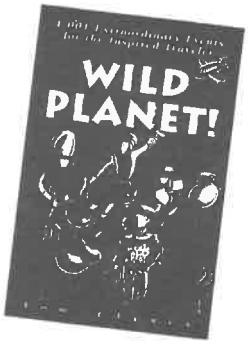

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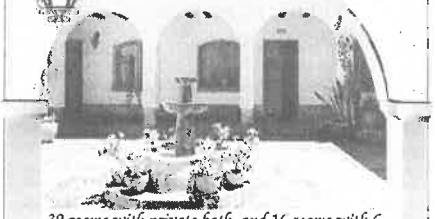

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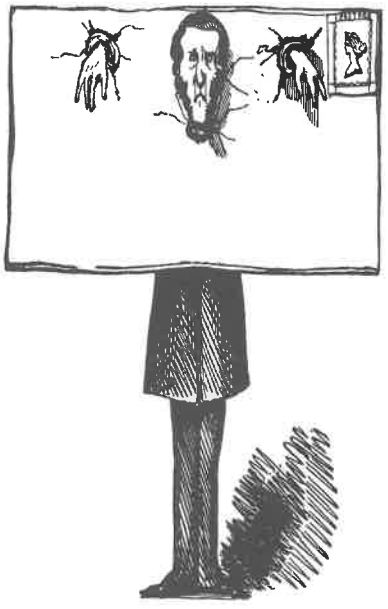

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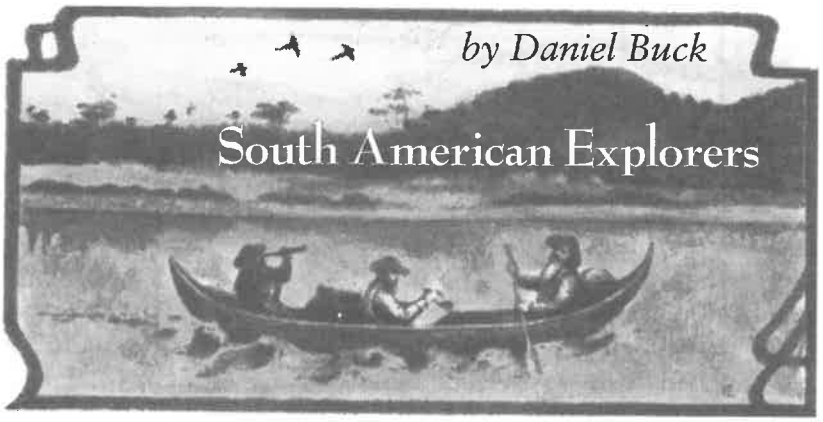

Bailey Willis

Geographer of Northern Patagonia

Bailey Willis, a sinewy man of medium height who sported a bushy beard, looked like a Scotch terrier—not someone to be trifled with. His thirty-year career with the United States Geological Service included assignments to survey Mount Rainier in Washington and parts of Montana, where he helped plan Glacier National Park.

In 1910, Willis met Smithsonian anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka in a Washington, D.C. restaurant. Through Hrdlick, Willis landed a stint as a USGS delegate to a scientific conference in Buenos Aires. Another chance encounter introduced him to Argentine Minister of Public Works Ezequiel Ramos Mejía, who was intent on finding artesian water and building railroads to boost the development of northern Patagonia. Impressed by Willis's credentials, Ramos Mejía named him director of a commission to study the natural resources of the region.

Willis hand-picked a team of geologists, geographers, and engineers from the United States. They set off for Argentina in early 1911. Their gear included a pile of saddles jettisoned by a Buffalo Bill show in London. Willis's second-in-command, Emilio Frey, was a seasoned Patagonian explorer. Frey recruited a support crew of every nationality: Basque, Chilean, Turk, Tehuelche, German, and French. Their French cook fed the team such delicacies as "shrimps with rice and curry, or squab on toast." (Native pigeon was substituted for squab.)

Their first task was to locate water, and plenty of it. Without it, the project, which faced heavy opposition in Congress, would fail and disgrace Ramos Mejía. Luckily, they determined that Arroyo Valcheta, near San Antonio Oeste, carried a sufficient flow to supply a needed reservoir.

In addition, Willis's team charted rail lines (including the Old Patagonian Express) and solidified plans for the recently created *Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi*, a project of particular interest to Frey. Also, they identified the site for the *Llao-Llao* hotel complex outside of Bariloche.

The *Comisión*'s final task was enormous. They surveyed and mapped a 12,500-square- mile area encompassing the cordillera zone of the Neuquén, Río Negro and Chubut Territories, from Junín de los Andes south to Esquel. Willis thought the region could support three million people. Willis had seen how "voluntary colonization" in the American west "had led to haphazard settlement and grievous waste of natural resources." He assumed that his survey would lay the foundation for "sound colonization."

This sparked Ramos Mejía's "dream of a great patriot," as Willis put it. Ramos Mejía envisioned an industrial city near Lake Nahuel Huapi, a Patagonian Pittsburgh that would be the capital of a new province. He charged the USGS geologist with the task. "I embraced the opportunity with vision," Willis said, "and the vision was ever with me." After some study, he identified a spot northeast of Bariloche, near where the Río Limay drains. Willis proposed damming the river for power, linking the city with Chile via a trans-Andean rail line, and constructing a web of highways. Beaming with pride, Willis later quoted a "clever Argentine journalist" who referred to a mythical city, rich in gold, in the Argentine interior: "'The fabled City of the Caesars has been found. We only have to build it.'"

The industrial City of the Caesars now plotted, Willis journeyed to Buenos Aires to meet with Ramos Mejía. He authorized funds to publish Willis's *Northern Patagonia*. Willis went back to the United States in 1913 to work on it and returned to Argentina the following year.

Unfortunately, during Willis's absence, Ramos Mejía had been ousted and the president had died. World War I gave the final blow. The development plan languished.

Willis left the USGS in 1915 to chair the geology department at Stanford University. In 1947, Stanford University Press published *A Yanqui in Patagonia*, Willis's memoir of his adventures in the southern Andes. His expeditionary life had evidently been salubrious. He was 91 when he died in 1949.

Willis's name is memorialized on three Patagonian hills and one secluded lagoon. Still, his most lasting legacy is the industrial city he planned on the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi that was never built.

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INCA CHOQEK'IRAW

by Vincent R. Lee

With thanks to Dr. Percy Paz, Director of the COPESCO Choqek'iraw Project, and his staff for their enthusiastic cooperation with our efforts, to Cuzco architect Roberto Samanez for copies of his excellent drawings of the site, and to Jean Pierre Protzen, architect, for copies of the drawings of Leonce Angrand.

In memory of Saturnino Malque, R.I.P.

Introduction

During a visit to Inca Choqek'iraw as a lecturer with a Wilderness Travel expedition in July of 1995, I noticed the faint, geometric pattern of overgrown andenes in the cloud forest atop the cliffs which border the site on the east. A steep, thickly forested slope separates these terraces from the well-known ruins currently being cleared by COPESCO, the Peruvian government's tourist agency, on the ridgecrest several hundred meters above. In 1995, no one at the site had ever been down to the andenes, and no cut trail to them existed. With an hour or two of free time, I decided to give it a try, but quickly got bogged down in the kilometer or so of steep, dense jungle that separated the site from our camp. Finally calling it quits, I reluctantly turned uphill toward the main plaza to rejoin my group. Annoyed that I didn't have enough time, I plowed resignedly into the wall of growth and almost immediately blundered into a large group of Inca buildings concealed by overgrown vegetation. Hoping to find a path of some sort from there on up to the plaza, I rooted around a bit but was both surprised and disappointed to find neither a trail nor any evidence at all of prior exploration. It seemed incredible that two potentially important sectors of such a well-known site had gone unnoticed or been completely ignored. I later learned that both the andenes and building group are noted on COPESCO's map of the area, but neither had ever been studied or documented.

Continuing our trek half a day west of Choqek'iraw, en route to Vilcabamba several days later, our arrieros stopped to water the mules partway down into the deep canyon of the Rio Blanco. We had been told that "new" andenes had been reported somewhere west of Choqek'iraw, but we had no idea where they were. The swampy area favored by the mules soon solved the problem, as we discovered it was surrounded by stone terraces. A few minutes of cursory exploration disclosed that the only fallen walls were ones nearest the water. Extending indefinitely into the jungle beyond, both across the slope and down the steep hillside below, were at least sixteen tiers of well preserved Inca andenes, including two small structures and a silted-in fountain of typical Inca design. Frustrated, I continued on, wishing I were free and had time to thoroughly explore the place. I vowed to return.

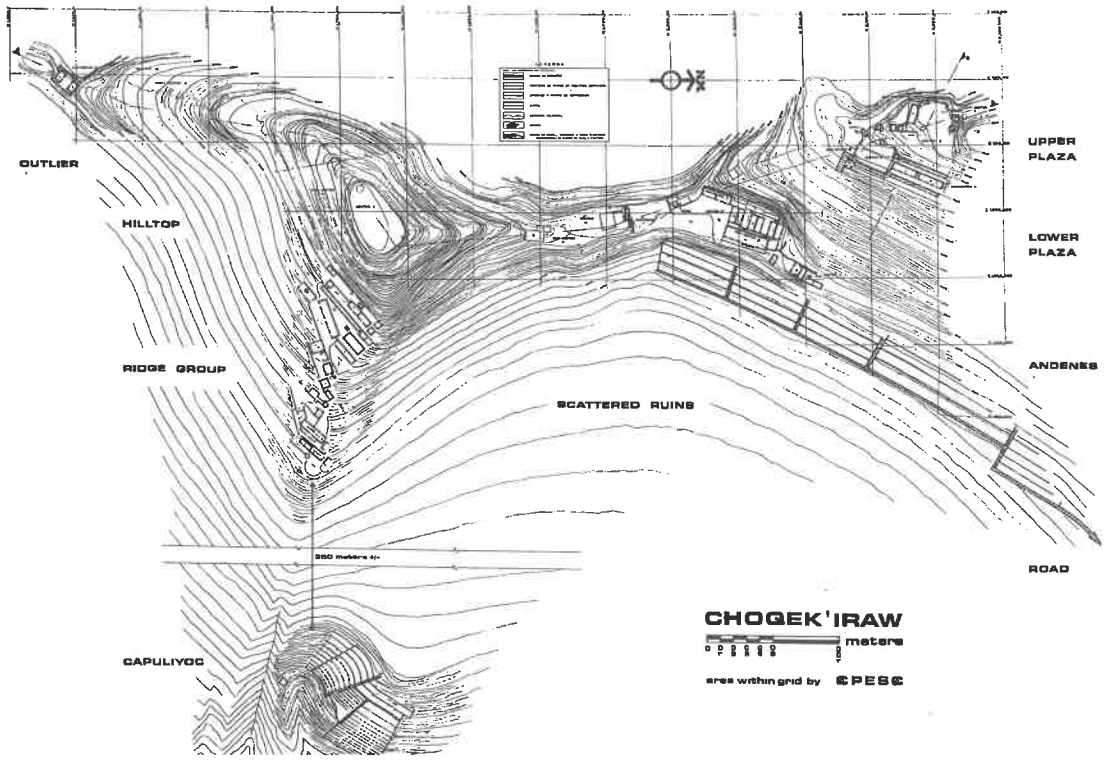
Background

The first known report of Choqek'iraw was that of a prospector named Juan Arias Diaz Topete. In 1710, he made three expeditions into the country between the Apurimac and Urubamba rivers. He reported finding "four ancient towns of heathen times, wholly uninhabited, one named Chuquiquirao, which in the Inca language means 'Gold cradle,'" but offered no other information about the site (Huertas Vallejos, 1973).

The next reference to the site is that of French explorer and treasure seeker Eugene Sartiges in 1834. His expedition is generally (and incorrectly) credited as the earliest to the ruins since Inca times. They approached via an incredibly long and roundabout route from Mollepata and the hacienda at Huadquinia on the Rio Urubamba. The expedition produced neither treasure nor site documentation. After Sartiges's visit, various Peruvian treasure hunters went to Choqek'iraw in search of the gold thought to be buried there, but all came away empty handed.

The 1847 visit of Leonce Angrand, the French Consul in Peru, produced the first drawings of the

Vincent R. Lee is an architect in Jackson Hole, Wyoming with an MFA in architecture from Princeton. His work has appeared in Northern Lights, Ñawpa Pacha, *the* South American Explorer, *the* Explorers Journal, Andean Past, *the* Boletin de Lima, *and* Kuelap.



ruins. Preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, the originals were only recently published (Angrand, 1972). Around 1865, the great Peruvian naturalist and cartographer Antonio Raimondi ascended to the upper Rio Vilcabamba, about 35 kilometers north of Choqek'iraw. He had hoped to find the ruins of Vilcapampa, Manco Inca's final capital during his post-Conquest defiance of Spanish rule. Finding nothing, Raimondi gave his prestigious endorsement to the growing belief (Weiner, 1993, 311) that Manco's lost city was Choqek'iraw, the only major Inca ruin then known in the region.

I knew I had to return.

After Angrand, the next serious documentation of the site was done in 1909 by Hiram Bingham, the American explorer who found Machu Picchu. His 1910 article in the *American Anthropologist* (Bingham, 1910) introduced Choqek'iraw to English-speaking students of the Inca and included a rough site map, photographs, and simple plans of the two principal ruin groups, which he called the Upper and Lower Plazas. Bingham's text also noted a distinct pair of outlying structures straddling the sharp ridgeline south of the plazas and an ill-defined cluster of what he thought to be lesser ruins smothered in the jungle below and southeast of the Lower Plaza. Bingham used a new and much more direct southern route by crossing the Apurimac to approach the site. Although it required a steep descent from nearly 3,200 meters above the village of Cachora to the river at 1,200 meters, a perilous, eighty-meter crossing by a bridge of telegraph cables and an even steeper ascent of 1,800 meters back up to the ruins, it nevertheless reduced to a matter of days what had previously taken weeks to accomplish. With minor adjustments since then, this trail became the route of choice for a quick (yet demanding) visit to Choqek'iraw from the modern road head at Cachora. To improve access, in 1994, the government replaced the old cable bridge with one of concrete and steel. Still, Bingham's description of the rigors of the trip and the scenic wonders encountered along the way are as true today as they were in 1909.

Recent Exploration

In 1986, at the height of the Sendero Luminoso years, COPESCO commissioned Cuzco architect Roberto Samanez to produce accurate maps and plans of the site in anticipation of the restoration work currently underway. After extensive clearing and tedious field measurements, Samanez's crew collected enough data for detailed architectural drawings of all the ruins up along the ridgecrest. Their site map also shows the approximate locations of several peripheral site features not part of his survey, including the cliff-top terraces and building group I came across in 1995. However, his maps show neither the andenes we found overlooking the Rio Blanco west of Choqek'-

iraw nor the small Inca site reached an hour or so before the ruins from the eastern (Apurimac) approach.

Finally, my own return to the site to follow up on my 1995 discoveries came sooner than expected, in May of 1996. All of the thirteen rolls I took in '95 were blurred due to a camera glitch. That, plus the fact that previously unmapped ruins lay there in the jungle, waiting to be explored, was just too much to take; I knew I had to return. My wife Nancy, a veteran of the 1995 trip, was as curious as I to see exactly what I'd found. Several friends also wanted to join in the fun. Bruce Davis, a masonry contractor who'd been on several previous Andean expeditions with us, volunteered to help out with the mapping. Computer scientist Bernard Bell was intrigued by the possibilities for archaeoastronomy at the site. Jim LaRue, Laura Simmons, Tuesday Bosch, and Geoff Scherer joined in for some mountaineering in the nearby Cordillera Vilcabamba. Last minute news of her mother's serious illness sadly forced Nancy's return to the States just before we left Cuzco.

We planned three weeks for essentially the same route that had taken eleven days to do in 1995: fifty condor kilometers from Cachora to the road head at Huancacalle in the Zona de Vilcabamba. It promised to be slow going, involving about 8,500 meters of elevation gain and 8,000 of loss. We scheduled several days for clearing and mapping at each of the new sites and threw in extra days for crossing the wild Rio Blanco, a potentially serious problem in rainy weather. On the advice of Dr. Percy Paz, Director of the COPESCO project in Cuzco, we contacted Anestacio Sierra in Cachora, who signed on as chief arriero and provided six mules and a helper, Saturnino Malque.

The expedition reached Choqek'iraw in two days, right on schedule, and mapped the area as planned. Sr. Lucas, the only campesino who lived near the ruins, was familiar with the cliff top andenes and called them Capuliyoc, or "place of wild cherry trees." He reopened an old, overgrown and long abandoned trail to take us there. The nearby building group turned out to be larger than we expected. Not even Lucas had a name for it, so we dubbed it the Ridge Group.

"place where water bursts out"

Our fortunes changed the day we left Choqek'iraw and made camp above the gorge of the Rio Blanco. Rain and fog hindered our progress. More serious, Saturnino suddenly became ill, went into convulsions and died after twenty-four hours of suffering, despite an all-night marathon of first aid measures. No cause was ever determined. His body and four of the mules returned to Cachora—a difficult forty-eight hour journey—and replacements arrived later. The resulting delay provided, however tragically, an opportunity to thoroughly explore and map the nearby andenes, called Pincha Unuyoc, "place where water bursts out." What had previously seemed like sixteen levels of terracing turned out to be fifty-six, though it took several days to cut our way all the way to the bottom. Better weather made crossing the Rio Blanco easier than expected. We continued on to Vilcabamba without incident, crossing two high passes and following many kilometers of well preserved Inca roadway en route.

The Ruins

Sunch'u Pata. Approaching the site from the east, via Bingham's Apurimac route, the first ruins encountered are at Sunch'u Pata, a faintly terraced, sloping meadow perched above an apparently bottomless quebrada. Choqek'iraw is plainly visible, just below the western skyline. Tumbled walls appear here and there in the surrounding brush, but only one building remains standing. It contains no niches and appears to have been a storage structure which originally had a second story. The lower level is well preserved and looms impressively atop the slope.

Curved Terraces. Beyond Sunch'u Pata, the road crosses the cliffs above the quebrada, passes the COPESCO camp and arrives at the north end of the long, curved terraces below Bingham's Lower Plaza. A two-meter wide stone road crosses the base of these terraces 350 meters to the south end, but no formal access has been found linking this road to the plaza above. Instead, a rough trail leads up through the jungle. Despite significant restoration by COPESCO, the original layout remains clear. Four sets of stairways connect the three tiers of terraces and several walled-up gaps in the masonry suggest modifications to the layout in Inca times.

The most striking feature of these terraces is the subtle arc of their design, about one unit of curvature in one hundred units of length. As a practical matter, they could have much more easily been straight segments, with slight changes of direction at the stairways to accommodate the contour of the slope. Instead your eye is led gently to the left as you proceed, finally focusing attention on the Truncated Hilltop just south of the Lower Plaza. The effect makes a long, boring slog artful and interesting instead.

Lower Plaza. Just above the Curved Terraces, at about 3,000 meters, the Lower Plaza forms the apparent high-status sector of the site. A great hall, a lesser hall, and

three double-sided, two-story buildings form two sides of the 30 x 70 meter plaza. Other lesser buildings complete the group. High status is suggested by the fact that all of the spaces between these buildings are accessed only by double-jamb doorways (an Inca detail reserved for particularly important circumstances), and some of the stonework in these portals is quite good, using large, ashlars (square, hewn stones). Some have cited the absence of Cuzco-style, fitted masonry at Choqek'iraw as evidence of low status, however the common quality of the building stone is due to the type of rock near the site. COPESCO is currently rebuilding the great hall and intends to do the same for other structures in danger of collapse.

complicated and enigmatic structure

Truncated Hilltop. The south end of the Lower Plaza has a complicated and enigmatic structure, seemingly a collection of small shrines entered by two double-jamb doorways and containing several double-jamb niches of varying size. At the east end of this group, a monumental, double-jamb gateway permits controlled passage through to what Bingham called the Truncated Hilltop beyond. This relatively modest terrain feature is the apparent geographic focal point of the site; its importance is seemingly underscored by the elaborate entrance structure described above. The hill's summit was leveled and ringed with stones to form an oval platform about 30 x 55 meters. No other constructed work is apparent.

The purpose of this platform is unknown, but the setting is majestic and the panoramic 360-degree views are spectacular. Certainly, as Bingham suggested, it would be an effective place from which to observe and/or send visual signals into the surrounding country (1910, 514). In addition, Bernard Bell believes the hilltop perfectly situated for a variety of celestial observations. Both the eastern and western skylines are punctuated by prominent crags and cols which might have marked sunrise or sunset on important dates in the Incas' agrarian calendar. Likewise, the nighttime view of the southern sky is clear and unobstructed. At the very least, an observer on this 3,050 meter summit is surrounded by an overwhelming display of the power and magnificence of Nature and the Cosmos.

The Outlier. Southwest from the Truncated Hilltop, a narrow ridge drops moderately to a small pass before plunging steeply to the Apurimac 1,800 meters below. Two finely crafted 6 x 9 meter buildings, facing each other across a small walled courtyard, straddle the ridgecrest in this pass. The masonry in this group is probably the best at Choqek'iraw. This, plus the studied isolation of the site both suggest special status, though to what purpose is unknown. Bernard Bell believes that small windows aligned toward views of distant landmarks may have calendric implications, but further measurements are needed to prove this.

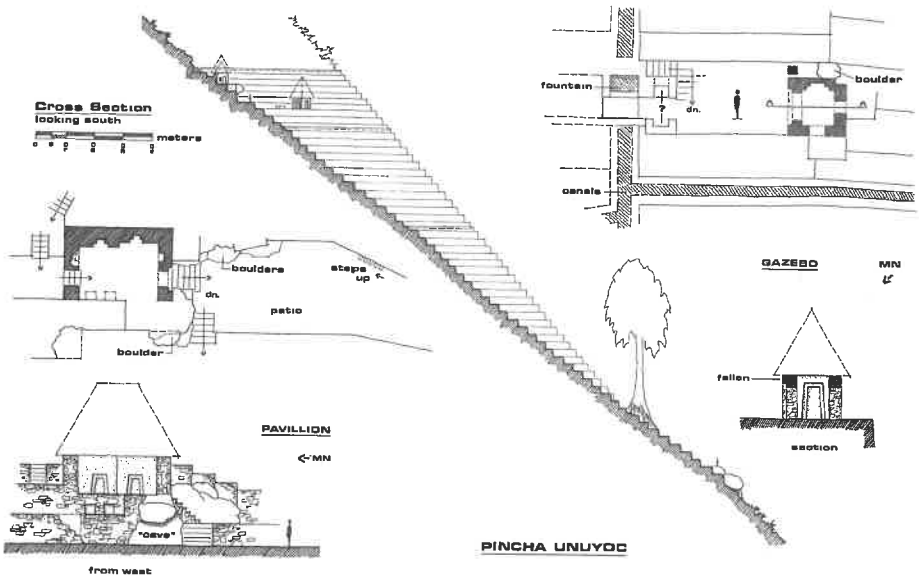
Upper Plaza. About fifty meters above and northwest of the Lower Plaza is the Upper Plaza reported by Bingham and surveyed by Samanez. The largest of the ten buildings in this group bear no relationship to the 30 x 30 meter ridge top platform. Instead, two 5 x 20 meter two-story halls and three long, narrow, dormitory-like structures cling to the steep slope below the plaza, facing southeast toward the Lower Plaza. The inferior quality of the stonework and total absence of double-jamb openings suggest lesser status. At the southwest end of this group is the so-called "giant stairway," an enigmatic tier of eight small terraces incorporating a large outcrop of bedrock and numerous desk-sized boulders into an unusual structure of unknown purpose. As of May 1996, this entire group remained only partly cleared.

perfectly situated for a variety of celestial observations

Water System. The actual Upper Plaza is defined by a retaining wall above a deep quebrada on the west and several common buildings on the south. A shrine-like structure with a double-jamb niche is surrounded by a complex array of low terraces, stairways, and niched retaining walls. This may have been associated with the water source for the entire site since it is aligned with the remains of a water channel across the plaza, thirty meters to the south. Following this alignment thirty meters further to the south, a fountain is nestled against some boulders and outcrops of bedrock. Currently, there is no running water in the ruins. However, a well-preserved canal runs down the ridge from the aforementioned fountain towards another one at the west side of the Lower Plaza. This shows how these two major building groups might have been watered in Inca times. From the Lower Plaza, the flow was probably directed below into the Curved Terraces.

New Finds

Ridge Group. Below the Curved Terraces, a slightly concave slope falls several hundred meters into a deep, rocky quebrada draining southward to the Apurimac. Now forested, this



hillside was probably used for cultivation or grazing in Inca times. Several faint stock trails crisscross the slope today, connecting occasional patches of open pasture land. Overgrown rock piles and rough terracing which dot the area are probably the scattered remains of Inca field workers' houses. The southern edge of this slope is a steep-sided ridge descending from the Truncated Hilltop. The Ridge Group, mapped during our 1996 expedition, descends this crest for one hundred meters at about the same elevation as the Curved Terraces.

The Ridge Group contains nearly as many buildings as the Upper and Lower Plazas combined but is laid out quite differently. Although the structures defining each of the six apparent patio groups are geometrically aligned, the groups themselves seem to have grown down the slope organically, perhaps being built over an extended period of time. The quality of the architecture and stonework is similar to that of the Upper Plaza, and the east and west great halls are only slightly smaller than their counterparts on the Lower Plaza. No double jambs or otherwise unusual design details are evident. Preservation varies greatly from building to building; about half the structures are still standing nearly at full height. The entire site is heavily overgrown with vegetation. A curious feature is that at least four old roadways may have connected the Ridge Group with the Outlier, but no suggestion remains of similar links to the nearby Lower Plaza.

Capuliyoc. Just below the bottom of the Ridge Group, the slope steepens to about thirty- five degrees and drops toward the brink of high cliffs falling into the eastern quebrada. Atop these cliffs, perhaps 350 meters below the Ridge Group, are what Sr. Lucas called "Capuliyoc." The only vantage point where they can be seen is across the gorge, near Sunch'u Pata, although only their northern edge is clearly visible. They are laid out in three sections and remain well- preserved despite a thick mantle of cloud forest. Cantilevered stone steps typical of Inca design abound, and a conventional stairway descends the center of the complex.

Both vertical and horizontal canals indicate the main water distribution system, and vertical grooves in the terrace walls show how water may have been transferred from level to level. The COPESCO crew believes the water source was a now dry gully a few hundred meters northeast, but the top of the canal system appears to emerge from the slope to the northwest. Roberto Samanez's site map shows a structure below the andenes called the "waterfall house" which we did not find. This name suggests that a water source may exist (or have existed) in the craggy terrain immediately southwest of the terraces, perhaps as a spring in the slope above the cliffs. Still, if good water was available in the gentler terrain to the northeast, why wasn't it used there, rather than diverted to terraces perched on the steep slabs of the cliff-top?

Pincha Unuyoc. The trail west from Choqek'iraw leaves the eastern approach road a few hundred meters north of the Curved Terraces and switches back up through the forest before rounding a ridge overlooking the Upper Plaza. A long northwest traverse above huge cliffs, falling 2,000 meters to the Apurimac, follows. After a kilometer or so, the trail passes through a small notch and down 750 meters of steep, grassy slopes into the canyon of the Rio Blanco. The views are of virtually uninhabited wilderness, a true Andean rarity.

Just where the trail descends from the bottom of the open slope into the steeper bush of the gorge, it passes close to the upper andenes of Pincha Unuyoc. An old camp a few meters beyond takes advantage of the only water short of the river, a seep still running in the midst of ruins. The entire site is covered with thick jungle, but the occasional visitors to the seep keep the fourth terrace somewhat clear. The view from this level gives no clue to the size of the place, which steps down the thick, forty-degree slope below for another fifty-two levels, ending atop the boulders and cliffs of the lower gorge.

The site contours across a concave slope probably once watered by a spring flowing from a small, silted cave forty meters up slope from the

The trail to Pincha Unuyoc slopes 750 meters into the canyon of the Río Blanco. Inset: Two-story ruins border the Lower Plaza, the high-status sector of Inca Choqek'iraw.

present day seep. A vertical canal below the cave distributed water into four horizontal channels with grooves in the terrace walls connecting the intermediate levels. The irrigated area was approximately 1.2 hectares and was about equally divided by the three highest laterals. The general arrangement is similar to Inti Pata, near Machu Picchu, a similarly isolated complex of steep terraces about the same size as Pincha Unuyoc.

Unlike Inti Pata (where the few simple buildings probably housed the workers who farmed the terraces), the two buildings here show signs of importance. Neither seems intended for housing or other practical purposes. The larger is essentially an open sided pavilion with sweeping views across the canyon to the west. Two doors, one with double exterior jambs, provide access and inside there are two double-jamb niches. Two levels below and sixty meters to the south, a tiny gazebo with a double-jamb doorway contains a full-height double-jamb interior niche and two narrow doors give out onto small exterior platforms. A fountain flows next to two enigmatic constructions across a small patio from this gazebo. It seems like a high status relaxation spa in the midst of what may have been a vertical garden for exotic or ornamental plants.

Patches of beige plaster still cling to the typically Incan masonry of the two buildings, but the stonework in the terrace walls is a strange and unique mixture of flat slabs set both horizontally and vertically. Despite the difference, both are equally well preserved. Cantilevered steps provide the only means of foot traffic between the fifty-six levels. Another curious detail: Not only are there many more such steps than necessary, but some are located within a meter of the ends of terraces, where one can easily walk from one level to the next. This recalls a similar observation by Fejos at Inti Pata (1944, 37), where he thought the excess steps might have been ornamental, to break up the visual monotony of the terraces.

Beyond Pincha Unuyoc. The name Choqek'iraw, generally translated as "golden cradle," actually means "mineral cradle," although no evidence of mining activity has been found anywhere near the site. The closest known mines are abandoned copper and silver diggings high on the ridgeline across the Rio Blanco from Pincha Unuyoc. The straight line distance is only a few kilometers, but getting there requires descending a steep, narrow trail about 750 meters to the river, fording the stream (possible only at low water), and climbing nearly 2,600 meters through bush and forest to the Abra San Juan at about 4,300 meters. Numerous mine tunnels are found near and east of the pass, all linked by well-preserved segments of gently graded Inca road. If this road once rounded the Rio Blanco drainage to Pincha Unuyoc, no trace of it remains, nor does the intervening terrain suggest any likely routes. According to local campesinos, the mines date from before colonial times and were worked off and on until a few years ago. A wide trail west of the Abra San Juan leads down to the isolated settlement of Yanama, where several ruins remain, probably from the colonial mining era.

From Yanama, heavily used Inca roads proceed around both ends of the 6,000 meter Pumasillo Range, one heading east over the Puerta Yanama and north down to Santa Teresa on the Rio Urubamba. The other follows the Rio Yanama briefly downstream to the west before turning north over the Abra Choquetecarpo to the modern road head at Huancacalle in the heart of Vilcabamba. Nearby Vitcos was almost certainly another of the "four ancient towns" reported by Topete, and Espiritu Pampa, several days to the northwest, was undoubtedly the third. The fourth town has yet to be found. Watch this space.

Conclusion

Until the material being excavated by Percy Paz and his crew is analyzed, there is no way to know who founded Choqek'iraw or when and why it was built. Certain inferences can be made from the ruins themselves which may shed some light on the matter.

First, the new work described here shows that the site was much larger than previously thought and, like Inca centers elsewhere, consisted of a relatively populous core surrounded by isolated satellites. Second, the division of the core into hanan and hurin districts based on the Upper and Lower Plazas, respectively (Samanez, 1995), fails to take into account the Ridge Group and other clusters of habitation yet to be documented in the surrounding forest. Finally, the overall site plan does not seem that of a "town" in the sense of Cuzco or Ollantaytambo. Rather, it recalls typical Inca country estates such as Pisaq, Huchuy Cuzco, and Vitcos. Most of all, it resembles Machu Picchu.

a poor man's Machu Picchu

Comparisons with Pachacuti's "lost city" abound. The choice of terrain is nearly identical and Choqek'iraw is situated to the Apurimac precisely as Machu Picchu is to the Urubamba. Except that the Truncated Hilltop lacks the scale, drama, and distinctive profile of Huayna Picchu, the setting at Choqek'iraw may be the more spectacular of the two. It hovers three times as far above its surrounding gorges and is domi-

nated on the north by the wild crags and ice fields of the 5,000 meter Nevado Yanama. Machu Picchu is clearly the larger and finer site, but both exhibit the high status architecture of royal occupation and both contain structures apparently intended for ritual use. Finally, both sites evoke much the same feeling of reverence for and celebration of wild Nature and the splendors of the high mountain world. Speculating as to what all of this means, it is easy to imagine Choqek'iraw as a poor man's Machu Picchu: the country estate, or perhaps hunting lodge, of a powerful person who knew and admired Pachacuti's masterpiece and aspired to one of his own. If the presence of double jambs implies importance, then the abundance of them at Choqek'iraw, more than in the entire province of Vilcapampa, suggests a royal owner particularly enamored of them. The architecture is everywhere classical in its proportions and details, suggesting that it is not "late," in the style of certain of Huayna Capac's projects. If, on the other hand, the Inca panacas typically continued to build even after the deaths of their Sapa Incas, the site seems too small to date from the reign of Pachacuti, whose works show a certain stinginess in the use of double jambs in any case. All of this leaves Topa Inca as the probable suspect, and if Chinchero is any indication, lots of double jambs would have made him feel right at home.

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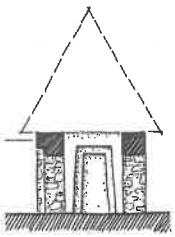

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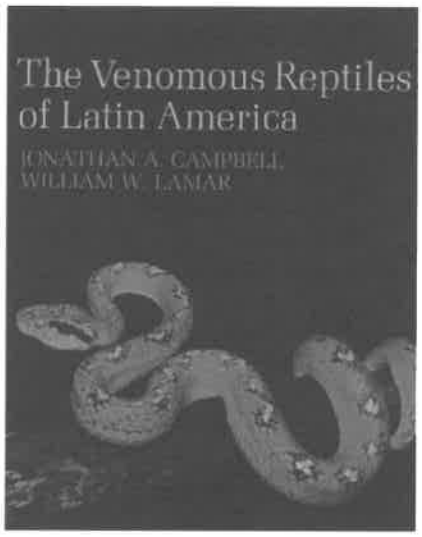
The Venomous Reptiles of Latin America

Jonathan A. Campbell and William W. Lamar

Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989. 425 pages, cloth.

Three years ago I published "Venomous Snakes of South America" in Issue 36 of the *South American Explorer*, based partly upon personal experience and partly on the great treasure trove of information contained in *The Venomous Reptiles of Latin America*, a book which deserves kudos as the best book ever written on the venomous reptiles of Central and South America. It will be decades, if ever, before anyone surpasses the depth and breadth of the scholarship or the presentation of this handsome volume.

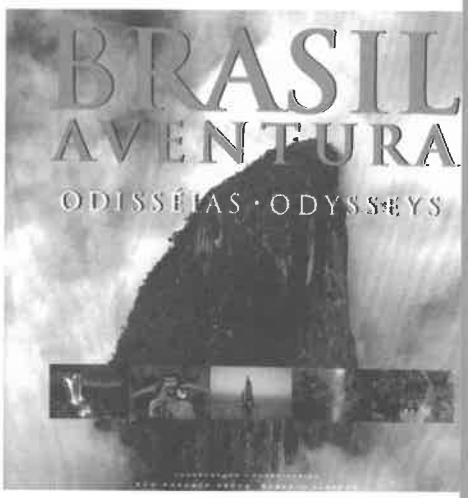


The authors have compiled one of the most visually stunning collections of color plates I have ever seen. They alone are worth the price of the book. A full seventy-one pages are devoted to 495 color photographs of venomous snakes like the cantil (a type of moccasin), copperhead, lanceheads (like the infamous fer-de-lance), rattlesnakes, and the bushmaster. The list of venomous snakes is so comprehensive it includes the only sea snake in the Western Hemisphere. Then the authors toss in 109 color photographs of non-venomous snakes which mimic venomous snakes. On top of all these captivating photographs, there are color pics of the beaded lizard and Gila monster—the world's only venomous lizards.

The authors cover Latin America from Mexico to Argentina and also account for North American species that slither into Mexico. The text is organized into twenty chapters, divided into three sections: snakebites, regional accounts and keys, and species accounts. The three snakebite chapters are thorough and up-to-date, describing first aid and medical treatment specific to Latin America. The second section contains detailed discussions of the physiography, climate, and vegetation for each country in Central and South America, plus the distribution of venomous snakes for each—only Chile, which has no venomous snakes except for the sea snake, is omitted. The Caribbean Islands which have venomous snakes are covered, too. The bulk of the book profiles each Latin American venomous reptile, stating local names, habitat, morphology, comparisons with similar-looking species, and special remarks. Also, you can learn which venomous snakes you might encounter when traveling in Latin America by consulting the book's 109 meticulously detailed maps.

For scientific interest or pure pleasure, this book is a great read. If you're freaked out by venomous snakes, just remember: Even though seventy-eight of the five hundred species of South American snakes are venomous, people very rarely encounter any snakes at all. Bon voyage, and don't fear venomous reptiles—love 'em!

—D. Bruce Means



Brasil Aventura: Odisséas-Odysseys

Ana Augusta Rocha and Roberto Linsker

Sao Paulo: Terra Virgem Editoria, 1997. 179 pages, large-format hardcover.

If the South American Explorers Club ever sets up a branch in Brazil, it should make use of Roberto Linsker's knowledge of far frontiers and Ana Augusta Rocha's editorial wisdom. These two natives of São Paulo are directors of *Terra Virgem Editora*, a small publishing house. As young professionals in a city of seventeen-million residents, they get out

of town whenever possible to fill their lungs with clean air and share experiences with other adventure writers and photographers. Then, back in São Paulo, Ana Augusta and Roberto turn to producing colorful coffee-table books with texts in both English and Portuguese. A new release, *Odysseys*, is the fourth in their annual *Brasil Aventura* series. As with earlier volumes, *Odysseys* comes with a bilingual pocket guide telling how to get to these far-flung frontiers yourself.

Robert Linsker, 33, a geologist, climbed in the Cordillera Blanca of Peru and tackled Mount Everest before knuckling down to capture on film the wilderness of his own country. Journalist Ana Augusta Rocha, 36, wrote for magazines until, with Roberto Linsker, she discovered the vast hinterlands of Brazil and recognized "*o privilégo de ser brasileira.*" Enthusiasm for the infinite reaches of Brazil enlivens her writing.

Of the ten regions explored in the first *Terra Virgem* book, only one, Iguaçu Falls, is on tourists' agendas. Even so, Iguaçu had to be included; no other natural wonder in South America can match its sights and sounds. Many of the other regions have been well-kept secrets. The second *Terra Virgem* book carries a theme: "*Vá, Veja e Sinta,*" *Go, See, and Feel for Yourself* the little-known lakes, cliffs, caves, and waterways. The third *Terra Virgem* book tells of *Islands*, those small universes set within Brazil's great rivers and lying off its 5,000 miles of coastline.

The historical introduction to the latest volume, *Odysseys*, opens with Vespucci in 1500 and ends with Rondon in the 1950s. Then ten chapters unfold: the Devil's Railroad, sailing the coast in a Hobi-Cat 21, rock-climbing north of Rio, reaching the source of the Amazon, the Xingu of the brothers Villas Boas, the Lost World of Roraima, and other hidden places. Great pictures.

How many years might it take to complete the *Brasil Aventura* series? Ana Augusta and Roberto cannot tell. Brazil's twenty-six states encompass half of South America and must hoard at least half its untold tales of travel. In Amazonas—a single state larger than Alaska—*Brasil Aventura* has so far explored only the Rio Negro. Most of Amazonas' people are squeezed into a single city, Manaus, leaving its remaining 600,000 square miles of rivers and forests largely devoid of humankind. That state itself is truly a *terra virgem* waiting to be revealed in words and images.

—Loren McIntyre

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The Road to Mexico

Lawrence J. Taylor and Maeve Hickey

University of Arizona Press, 1997. 200 pages, paperback.

Lawrence Taylor and Maeve Hickey's *The Road to Mexico* offers a delicious narrative and evocative photos on the road stretching from Tucson, Arizona to Magdalena de Kino, Sonora.

Proving that travel is best enjoyed when it's not rushed, the authors take time to talk to the people who live in the Sonoran Desert. Anthropologist Taylor quotes a wide range of people from American Automobile Association clerks ("Lots of cars get stolen down there") to muralists to cattle ranchers. The book finds its voice in this regional chorus and turns its focus on picturesque characters, such as the U.S.-born mariachi who won't cross the borderline. "Fernando was not about to risk the Mexico of his imagination, of his mariachi, by penetrating that border," Taylor writes. "He would consider flying over it, landing in the center of the nation, in the Guadalajara of Mariachi Vargas, but Fernando Sanchez was not going to take the road to Mexico."

The authors travel south on Interstate 19, taking in bizarre roadside attractions such as the building resembling a cow skull in Amado, Arizona. Taylor writes, "The skull is actually the facade of a simple rectangular building within which a seemingly endless series of commercial aspirations have sputtered."

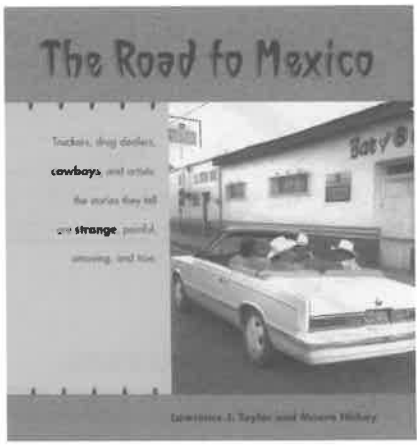
There are other attractions—the Tohono O'odham Desert Diamond Casino on the eastern edge of the San Xavier Reservation, the out-of-place assortment of golf courses in the middle of the desert, the train tracks that don't meet up at the border, and Luis Donaldo Colosio's grave in Magdalena.

Hickey's black-and-white photos complement the text. The visual representation is neither stereotypical or outlandish. The cow skull building is shown here, along with revelers, street scenes, and saguaros.

Aimed at a U.S. audience, *The Road to Mexico* does not mince words about U.S. border policy: "Not that the U.S. government has anything like a consistent attitude toward the border," Taylor writes. "Our government's capitalist concern with the free flow of commodities is balanced—or undermined—by a sporadic desire, usually in response to a political campaign, to prevent other sorts of free-market flow: undocumented workers and drugs. So even as the Department of Transportation reduces border red tape for Mexican truckers (though some are turned back when they show up at the checkpoint with orange crates in place of driver's seats), the customs officials are urged to stop more of the drug traffic, and the Border Patrol plays war games in the national forest. One's sense of the border depends on how he or she looks at it. The experience of "crossing" changes with time and place, and with the company one keeps."

The best news is saved for the end—the authors are at work on another book of essays and photos from the borderlands. But don't wait, you can begin your trip today.

—Ron Mader



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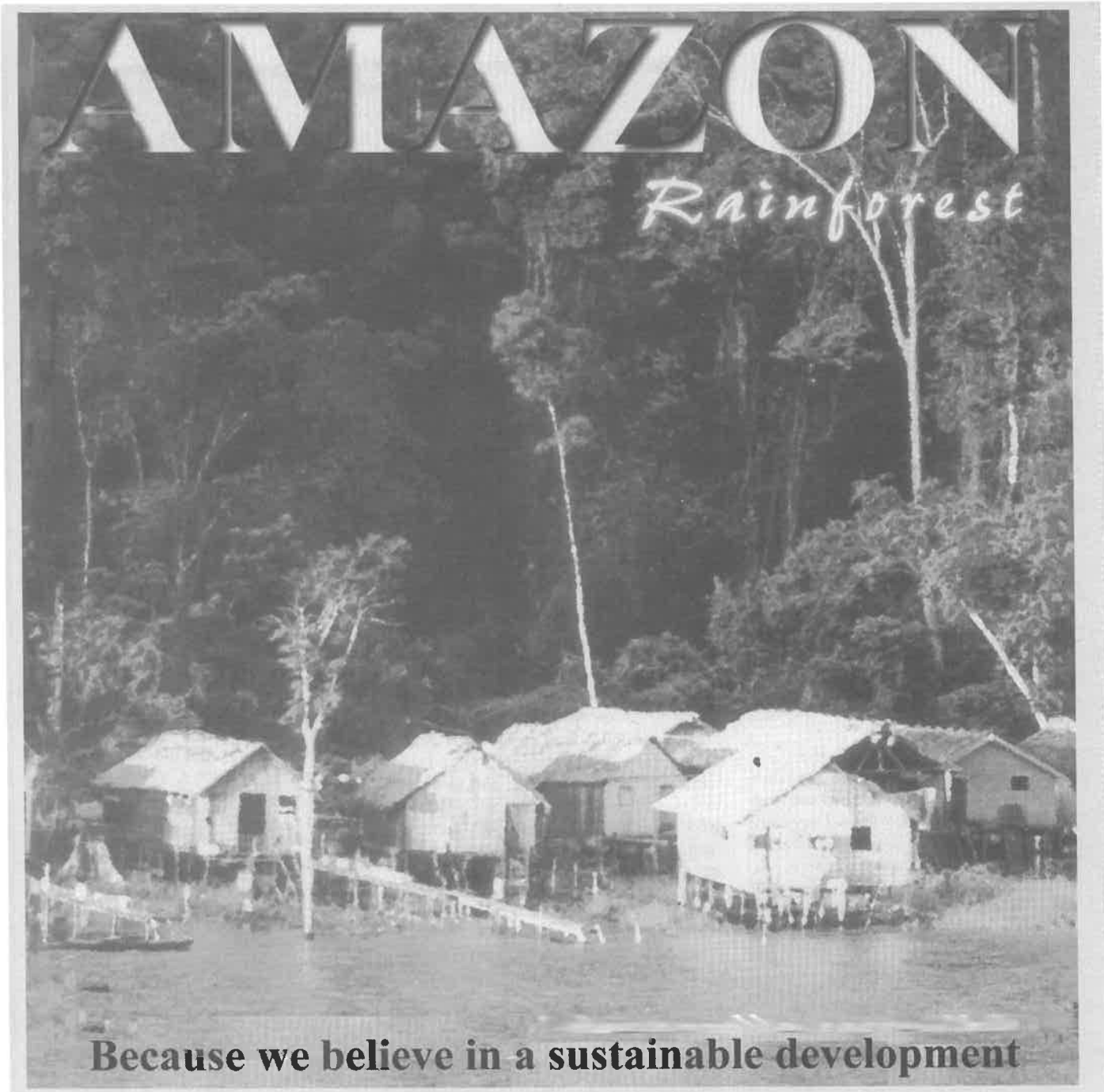

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Quito Club

We've been getting quite a few questions about El Niño. Compared to Peru and Chile, Ecuador has been spared the worst. While it is true that there have been floods and landslides on the coast, it's the rainy season here, and the weather has not been much more extreme than in years past. The hasty closure of the Quito airport for tarmac resurfacing in anticipation of heavy El Niño rains seemed to be more of a political move than a practical one. They probably should have redone Guayaquil's runway, since it flooded during the last week of November, causing the airport to close for several days! For updates on El Niño, see the South American Explorers Club web site at http://www.samexplo.org and click on "Other Interesting Sites" to find a link to the El Niño Theme Page.

Tim and Janice of the Lima Clubhouse graced the Quito Clubhouse with their presence for two weeks. They came up to take Spanish lessons, get hauled away by the migration police, eat Thanksgiving dinner, see how busy the Quito Clubhouse really is, and participate in our General Assembly meeting. They have now gone home to Lima, full of Spanish, stories, and turkey.

The General Assembly meeting went well. Attendance was at an all-time high, and the ideas and bagels flowed very freely. We will be putting some of the ideas into action soon, so keep an eye out for new services at the clubhouse.

We've been acting on suggestions appearing on the Clubhouses new Suggestion Board. Proof: Your membership now includes a steaming cup of hot cocoa.

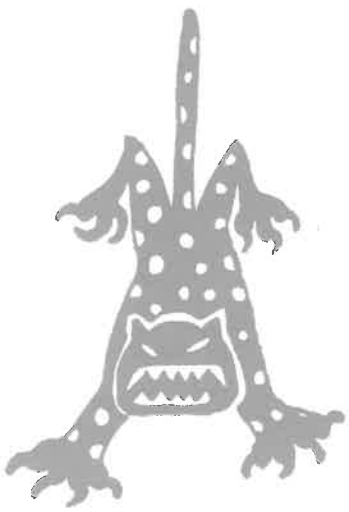
Club presentations have continued with great success: Club Manager Sheila Corwin showed slides from her travels through Bolivia, Chile, and Peru; Norby Lopez was back by popular demand, this time to do a presentation about the Andean condor; Terry Newcombe, a Canadian member, held a well-attended "fire-side discussion" about the challenges of conservation work in Ecuador; and Colombian climber Rodrigo Arias Duque gave a slide presentation on rock climbing, mountaineering, and trekking in Colombia and the Americas. We think we have found the key to high member turnout for presentations: "Popcorn will be served" seems to lure them in droves.

Our library is being whipped into shape by one of our full-time volunteers. About twenty-five books are checked in and out every day (which is high volume for a library of this size), and we even have a card catalog! Now all we need are some more good books. So, if you have just finished a degree in Latin American Studies and have been searching for a worthy outfit to donate your books to, look no further! We will gladly accept any appropriate books you have to offer.

We are still working very closely with La Tola, an orphanage in Quito for boys who shine shoes by day and go to school at night. We have raised our bimonthly donation from a quintal of rice to one of quinoa, which has higher nutritional value, but there is still much to do. Any donations would be appreciated, but school supplies, volunteer time, and food are the most important at this point. We are also looking into helping out at a shelter for battered women in Quito.

Congratulations to members Mark Allen and Michelle Paul who have been blessed with a baby girl. India Nantu Paul Allen arrived at 7:02 A.M. on October 19, 1997 weighing 7 lbs and measuring 20 inches long. For all you non-Quechua speakers, *Nantu*, the baby's middle name, is Quechua for "moon."

—Quito Clubhouse Staff



Lima Club

The phone call came on a Friday afternoon from one of the more than forty-five SAEC members living and working in Lima.

"How late are you open?" he asked imploringly.

"Only 'til five," I answered.

"I won't be out of work by then. Are you open on Saturday?...No? Sunday? ...No? Well, then when can I come to the club?"

Okay. We get the message.

So, from this day forward, on the first Wednesday of every month, the Lima Clubhouse will be open from 9:30 A.M. to 8 P.M.

We received another call recently from a German traveler, concerned about a rumor she had heard that routes to Cusco via the central Andes should be avoided because of renewed activity by the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso (A.K.A.: Shining Path).

Unfortunately, the latter days of 1997 saw a resurgence of the Maoist guerrilla movement. Oscar Ramírez Durand "Feliciano"—leader of Sendero since the 1992 capture of Abimael Guzman—directed a series of military attacks and political assassinations in the poorest provinces of Ayacucho, Junín, Cerro de Pasco, Huánuco, Ucayali, La Libertad, and San Martín.

The violence appears to be part of a campaign to gain grass-roots support in areas that were all but Sendero-controlled during the late 1980s. The focus has been in provinces like Padre Abad, Satipo and La Mar, where destitution, chronic malnutrition and illiteracy are high, and basic services like electricity and running water remain an exception rather than a norm.

Travelers have not been targeted. At the time of this writing, the most common highland route to Cusco (Lima–Huancayo–Ayacucho–Andahuaylas–Abancay–Cusco) has not been scarred by the political violence. We will continue to watch the situation, posting any new travel advisories on our SAEC web page (http://www.samexplo.org).

For the most part, we have been telling members who plan to travel to the department capital of Ayacucho not to be afraid to take day trips to Quínua or Huanta. Both places are prized for their scenic charm, haunting music, and stunning artesania.

However, we have strongly advised against overnight excursions into the countryside surrounding the City of Ayacucho, or traveling to points farther north or east, like San Francisco and San Miguel.

On Dec. 1, we had our first executive board meeting in a long time. We discussed several possible policy changes, including guidelines for receiving members' packages, organization of clubhouse information, focusing our conservation efforts on the Cordillera Blanca in Huaraz, etc.

For the last five months, the Lima Clubhouse has been in the process of recoding all of its trip reports. Soon, members will be able to pin-point information by topic. The problem is, with all the paper shuffling and reorganizing, we've had to put a halt to allowing members to carry trip reports out of the club to make photocopies. What we really need is a photocopier of our own in the office.

Donations, anyone?

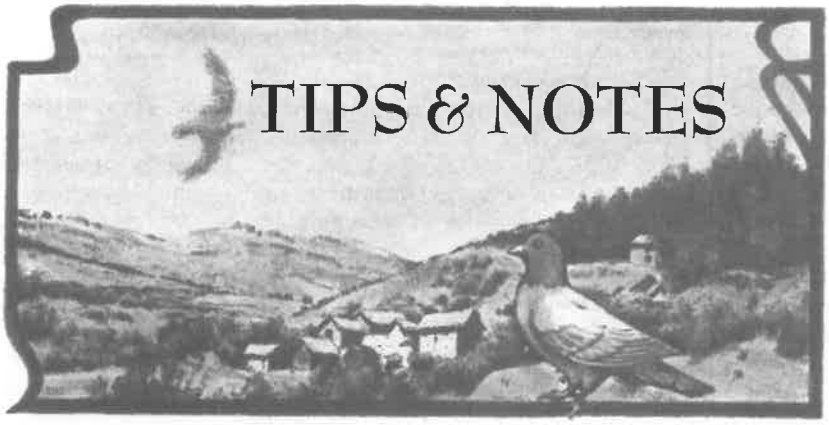
Muchísimas gracias to members Jeane Noble and Alice Story for helping out with hand-carries.

Members Tim Flagg and Emmy Skinner, both Oxford University students, spent the better part of three months in the Department of Ayacucho conducting an anthropological survey for a British-based NGO. For Tim, the time in the Sierra was actually a homecoming.

Adopted by British missionaries more than twenty years ago, Tim was reunited with his birth mother, and spent time getting to know a brother and three sisters he had not seen since he was an infant. An aunt, determined to fulfill Tim's birthright, insisted that he take title to a stretch of land to cultivate, along with a few goats and an ox.

We would tell more, but Tim has promised us an article for a future issue of *South American Explorer*, and we wouldn't want to steal his thunder.

—Lima Clubhouse Staff



What's Cool: Hotmail

Sure, members send and receive e-mail at the Lima and Quito Clubhouses. But how can you cyber-brag about your great Latin American trip in countries like Costa Rica, Bolivia, and Chile that don't have SAEC Clubhouses?

The answer: Hotmail.

With Hotmail, your e-mail messages are sent to and from the Hotmail website (http://www.hotmail.com), so you can send and retrieve e-mail from any web browser and Internet connection. Best of all, Hotmail is FREE. Browse their web site for more details.

Before you leave on your trip, find out where you can access the World Wide Web in Central and South America by browsing http://cybercaptive.com. This site has a Cybercafe Database Search Engine that covers seventy-five countries, has more than 15,000 listings, and is updated daily. The database will give you information on where cybercafes are located and how much they charge per hour for Internet access.

Papagaio Magazine

What do you get if you ask Journey Latin America for a free subscription to their magazine? The latest issue of the twenty-four page *Pagagaio* contains a comparison of Chilean wines, a musical tour of Latin America, the scoop on Montevideo's tango summit, a sample of Mexican recipes, info on Latin American air passes, destination reports, and travel tips. Further proof of the riveting topics covered in *Papagaio:* The Winter 1997 issue contains a glowing review of the South American Explorers Club.

For a complimentary magazine, write Journey Latin America at 14-16 Devonshire Road, Chiswick, London W4 2HD or send a fax with your request to 011-44-181-742-1312.

Darién Detour

Since the Crucero Express, the passenger/cargo ferry that carried both car and driver from Panama to Colombia, stopped running in late 1996, getting around the impassable Darién Gap to explore South America by road has been difficult. One way: Members have been skipping Central America altogether and shipping their vehicles directly into South America.

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Another company to try is **Atlantis Shipping**, which specializes in transporting automobiles. Their ships leave weekly from Miami to Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina. For more information, call (305)888-0337.

Bye-Bye Bío-Bío

Rafters, bid farewell to Lava South, Lost Yak, Milky Way, and Jug Buster, the legendary rapids of Chile's Río Bío-Bío. By 1999, all these challenging Class 5 rapids will be lost as a result of hydroelectric dam construction. One dam has already been built, and the Chil-

ean government has formally approved the 1998 construction of a second dam in the Nirreco Canyon.

Are there rafting challenges beyond the Bío-Bío? Some expert rafters have long maintained that the Río Futaleufú, a Class 5 river east of Chaitén in Chile, was always the Bío-Bío's unsung superior. So even if you've missed the chance to run the inimitable Bío-Bío, keep in mind that Chile has over twenty rivers with excellent white water rafting between Santiago and Tierra del Fuego.

Machu Picchu Fire: A Report

During September 1997, a fire set by people living along the Urubamba River below Machu Picchu burned a large portion of the cloud forest vegetation within the Historical Sanctuary.

Farmers regularly "slash and burn" vegetation to clear areas for agriculture. However, last September was unusually dry, and fires spread uncontrollably. The Machu Picchu fire burned both sides of Huayna Picchu mountain, the back side of Machu Picchu from the river to the site, and Cerro San Miguel across the river from the railroad station at Puente Ruinas.

Although the loss of large swatches of original growth vegetation is regrettable, the archaeological complex itself was never in danger. The fire would have naturally stopped at the perimeter wall and first granite buildings.

There was a fortunate outcome to the fire—a number of unknown and unstudied structures were exposed. First, a stone stairway was seen to wind down from the north side of the quarry area, apparently to the river below. This may represent yet another "Inca Trail" to Machu Picchu. A smaller hill located between Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu mountain now shows worked stone walls and stairways. The fire also cleared the overgrown vegetation covering the rough line of pointed boulders bordering west side of the main plaza. Now it is evident that the stones are sculptured and were not placed randomly.

Despite all, Andean fires remain a serious problem, burning hundreds of acres of mountain vegetation every day.

—Gary Ziegler

Robert's Rules for Travel in Latin America:

1. Note that all travel guides and maps are out of date. Worse, the ones you need the most are even more out of date.

2. Be cautious when practicing your newly acquired language skills, especially when talking to airport Customs folks. Don't forget *bomba* describes both your handy little water filter pump and a package of high explosives.

3. More often than not, the word you use to describe some item of food will have some other, invariably obscene meaning.

4. Ninety-nine percent of the compliments you receive for your fluency in Spanish (or Portuguese, or Quechua) play to your vanity. If you spoke the language at all well, no one would think to mention it.

5. Be wary of travel advice offered by someone who relies on an American Express Gold card or belongs to the Screen Actors Guild.

6. Don't assume locals know the best way to do things. One look at the ruins all around you should convince you of the folly of this reasoning.

7. Unless you're a fat-cat donor to the political party that appointed the current ambassador, own a multinational corporation, or receive a U.S. goverment paycheck for a grade GS-15 or above, expect nothing from your Embassy or Consulate.

8. A visitor abroad is an outsider. To expect to pay what the locals pay is laughable. In a few countries, overcharging tourists is not merely a time-honored custom, but the law of the land.

9. Eco-travel is an oxymoron.

10. If you can't be fluent, be funny. Learn enough of the language to say, "I just flew in from New York, and boy, are my arms tired!"

11. If you don't want to be an Ugly American lie low. Be neither seen nor heard in public. Dress down and shut up.

12. The microorganisms that dictate what goes on in your gastrointestinal tract do not have reciprocal agreements with those in the countries you are visiting.

13. With few exceptions, police see their purpose as earning a livelihood and supporting the current regime—in that order. Any assistance they may unwittingly render is a fluke.

—Robert Runyard

Do you have any tips you picked up during your travels? Send them to Tips from the Road, South American Explorers Club, 126 Indian Creek Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 or e-mail us at tips&notes @samexplo.org. See your name in print and bask in other members' thanks and admiration.

The South American Explorers Club sells a host of other excellent guidebooks and maps of South and Central America, and cassettes and CDs of Latin American music.

To place an order or to request a free catalog: use the order form on page 63, call (800) 274-0568 9A.M.-5P.M. EST, fax your request to (607) 277-6122, e-mail us at **explorer@samexplo.org**, or take a look at our catalog on-line at **http://www.samexplo.org.**

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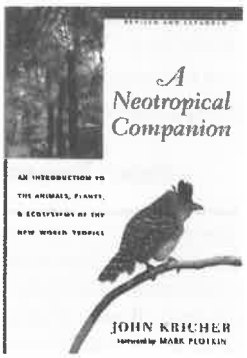

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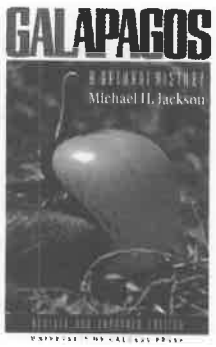

A Guide to the Birds of the Galápagos Islands
Isabel Castro & Antonia Philipps
The culmination of years of experience working with birds at the Charles Darwin Research Station and visits to the islands of the Galápagos. Covers every species ever recorded on the Galápagos. Twenty-eight color plates illustrate the species and key island habitats. Ideal for identification.
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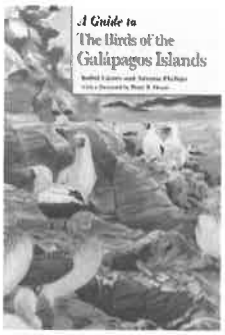

The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time
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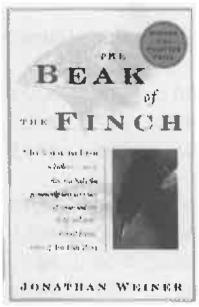

Bolivia Handbook
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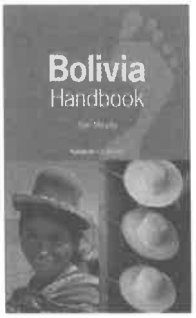

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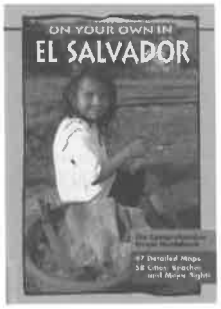

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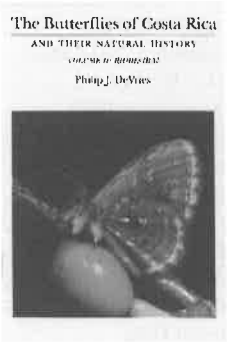

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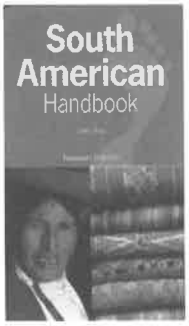

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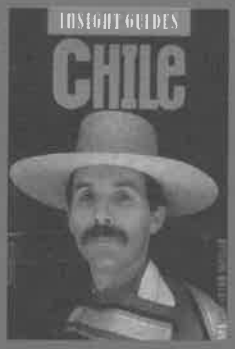

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